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# TRAGIC DRAMAS FROM HISTORY.

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# TRAGIC DRAMAS FROM HISTORY

## With Legendary and other Poems

By ROBERT BUCHANAN, M.A.
LATE PROFESSOR OF LOGIC AND RHETORIC IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW.

Gratia Musa tibi! nam tu solatia praebes,
Tu requies curae, tu medicina, venis.
OVID.

VOLUME II.

EDINBURGH:
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# CONTENTS.


PAGE

GASTON PHŒBUS, A TRAGEDY, . 1

EDBURGA, A TRAGEDY, . . . . . 115

LEGENDARY AND OTHER POEMS, . . 213

I. *MISCELLANEOUS POEMS*—

VERSES INTRODUCTORY, . . 215

THE DISSUASIVE AND APOLOGY, . . . 218

THE CURSE OF GLENCO, . . . 219

TO THE CUCKOO, . . . . . 224

THE SONG-SPELL, . . . . . 226

THE MISANTHROPE'S PRAYER, . . . 228

THE GLEN, . . . . . 229

LINES WRITTEN AT THE FALLS OF BRUAR IN ATHOL, . . . . 232

TO MY COPSE-CUTTERS, . . . . 235

LINES WRITTEN ON THE BANKS OF THE WYE, 237

PAGE

MAY, . . . . . 238

WRITTEN IN D——S WOOD, . . . . 239

LINES TO A VILLAGE BEAUTY, . . . 240

COMPARATIVE BEAUTY, . . . . 241

LINES WRITTEN IN A HIGHLAND GLEN, . 243

THE CASTLES OF INDOLENCE, . . . 244

LINES WRITTEN ON RE-VISITING THE FALLS OF MONESS, NEAR ABERFELDY (PERTHSHIRE), . . . . . 246

MORNING MIST ON DUNIQUAICH, . . 247

LINES—A PROLOGUE, . . . . . 248

THE BEAUTIFUL, . . . . . 250

II. *LEGENDARY POEMS AND BALLADS*—

THE VOW IN GLENTREUIL, . . . 254

THE MAIDEN'S TOWER, . . . . . 261

THE REIVER'S REDE, . . . . . 267

THE ASH-TREE WELL, . . . . 272

LEGENDARY BALLAD, . . . . 277

A LEGEND OF O'SULLIVAN, . . . . 280

MERLIN'S TOMB, . . . . . 289

KING DAG AND HIS SPARROW, . . . 296

III. *POEMS IN BLANK VERSE*—

LINES WRITTEN AT THE FALLS OF THE MASSAN IN GLEN-MASSAN, ARGYLESHIRE, . 302

PAGE

TO AN ASH-TREE, . . . . . 304

THE DOMINIE'S LINN, . . . . . 309

VISION AND VERITY, . . . . . 319

LINES WRITTEN ON DESTROYING BY FIRE A LARGE MASS OF MANUSCRIPT PAPERS, . 323

THE PROPHET'S LAMENT FOR JERUSALEM, . 324

IV. *SONNETS AND SHORTER PIECES—*

THE KALENDS OF MAY, . . . . . 326

CASIMIR'S ODE—*AD SUAM TESTUDINEM*, . 237

VERSION OF PSALM CXXXVII., . . . . 328

DAVID'S LAMENT FOR SAUL AND JONATHAN, 329

LAMENT FOR THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES, . . . . . 330

LINES WRITTEN AT THE GARRAWALT IN BALLOCHBUIE FOREST, BRAEMAR, . . 331

LINES WRITTEN APRIL 18, 1845, . . . 331

THE BIRK-WOODS OF GLENGARRY. . . 332

FALSE ROSALIE, . . . . . 334

NOTABLE DAYS, . . . . . 335

MEMORY, . . . . . 336

*SONNETS—*

MAY, . . . . . 337

AUTUMN, . . . . . 338

WINTER, . . . . . 338

PAGE

FANCY AND FACT, . . . . 339

WRITTEN IN AUTUMN 18—, . . . . . 340

TO A FOUNTAIN IN A CAVE, . . . . 341

SURPRISED BY MORNING IN THE PROSECUTION OF AN INTERESTING STUDY, . . 342

GERROW-HILL, . . . . . 342

# GASTON PHŒBUS.

## A Tragedy.

IN FIVE ACTS.

# PREFACE.

In the following tragedy the scene lies partly at Pampeluna, the capital of Navarre, and partly at Orthes, the chief town of Bierne (or Bearn), and residence of the Count of Foix. The historical event on which the drama founds is recorded by Froissart in his *Chronicles*. It occurred A.D. 1382, six years before the visit of the Chronicler to the court of Gaston Phœbus. With the exception of Giovanni of Acquaviva, altogether a fictitious personage, the leading characters introduced into the action of the piece will all of them be found mentioned by Froissart.

The name of Sir Yvain's mother has not been recorded by the Chronicler. In one passage of his work Froissart styles her son Sir Yvain of Lescar, in another of Leschelle: the former of these designations has suggested the name invented for her in the drama.

Of the younger Gaston's bride, or wife—for it would appear they were actually married—the real name seems to have been Beatrice. But as the part assigned to her in the action of the play has no foundation whatever in history, the author has retained the fictitious one of Isabel, which originally, and by mistake, he had bestowed on her.

Her brother, the Count of Armagnac, is by Froissart some-

times named Bertrand, and sometimes Bernard. His elder brother, Count John, died at Alexandria while engaged in an expedition against Galeazzo, Duke of Milan: and a very interesting account of the circumstances attending his death will be found in Froissart, vol. ii. c. 177 (Lord Berners' translation).

In the action, as well as in the catastrophe of the following tragedy, considerable license has been taken with the historical facts. For the fate assigned by him to Isabel of Armagnac, as well as for the share allotted her in the action of his drama, the author, as already stated, has no warrant from history. And though it be historically true that the bastard Yvain was accidentally the cause of his brother's death, inasmuch as it was he who, in consequence of a boyish quarrel betwixt them, discovered to his father the bag or purse of poison which Yvain carried in his bosom, and with which, supposing it to be merely a love-powder, he purposed, at the instigation of his uncle, Charles of Navarre, to drug his father's cup; still, for the systematic plot which in the following tragedy he is represented as carrying on against his brother's life, and for the part ascribed to him in the actual production of the catastrophe, there is from history no authority whatever. Gaston, in fact, died by the hand of his father, the Count of Foix, in a moment of passion. Such a catastrophe, however, would, for dramatic purposes, be far too revolting and horrible. The author accordingly has made it to turn on the guilty ambition of the bastard Yvain, aiming to remove his legitimate brother.

It would appear that Yvain was in fact the favourite son of the Count of Foix, who was engaged in negotiations to have

him and another of his bastard sons, named Gratian, secured in the succession to his titles and dominions, when he was cut off by a sudden death in 1391, while preparing to sit down to table, and in the act of washing his hands, on his return from hunting.

In the year following died Sir Yvain himself, and by a death as extraordinary and nearly as tragical as that which had befallen his legitimate brother.

He was one of the Knights of the Chamber to the young French King, Charles VI., and one of his especial favourites. While engaged with that gay prince and four young lords of his Court in playing the part of savages in a sort of masque or dance before the Queen, on occasion of the marriage of one of her ladies, their dress, which was composed of linen, closely fitted to the body, pitched over and covered with flax to give them the appearance of hairy men (or *Wode-houses*, as Lord Berners calls them), was accidentally set on fire, and, with the exception of the King, and one other of the party, the whole, including Sir Yvain of Foix, were miserably burnt to death.

# Dramatis Personae.

## MEN.

| | |
|---|---|
| Charles (surnamed the Bad), | *King of Navarre.* |
| Gaston (Phœbus) De Monçada, | *Sovereign Count of Foix and Viscount of Bierne (or Bearn); brother-in-law of Charles.* |
| Gaston the Younger, | *Son to the Count of Foix.* |
| Sir Yvain of Lescar, | *Bastard son to the Count of Foix.* |
| Sir Espagne de Leon, | *A Knight of the Count's household.* |
| Gratian, | *Companion to the younger Gaston.* |
| John Froissart, | *Treasurer and Canon of Chimay, guest of the Count of Foix.* |
| Nicholas D'Escail, | *Chaplain to the Count.* |
| Giovanni of Acquaviva, | *A philosopher residing at the Court of Navarre.* |

Lords and Knights of Foix and Bierne, Deputies of Navarre.

*Physicians—Surgeon—Assassins, etc. etc.*

## WOMEN.

| | |
|---|---|
| Agnes of Navarre, | *Countess of Foix, and sister of Charles the Bad.* |
| Florence of Lescar, | *Mother of Sir Yvain, and mistress of the Count of Foix.* |
| Isabel of Armagnac, | *Sister of the Count of Armagnac, betrothed to Gaston the Younger.* |

# ACT I.

## Scene First.

ORTHES—IN FRONT OF THE HOSTEL STYLED 'THE MOON.'

(*Enter* FROISSART *and* SIR ESPAGNE DE LEON, *meeting.*)

*Sir Espagne.* Ha! master Froissart!
*Froissart.* Sir Espagne de Leon,
My courteous road-fellow, from Pamiers!
Well met—well met! We parted suddenly
Last time we lighted here.
*Sir Esp.* Right suddenly;—
And I have ridden many a weary league
By dale and down since then; but luckier thou
Art still—
*Frois.* (*pointing to the hostel*). The man i' the moon!
*Sir Esp.* Ha! master Froissart!
Still the old vein! But where hast thou bestowed
Our fellow-travellers, Tristan and Hector,
Rollant and Bruno? I have not, thou see'st,
Forgot their worthy names.

*Frois.* I' faith, Sir Knight,
My hounds were whelped under a lucky dog-star :—
They 're gone to Court, where they are lodged in state
In the Count's kennel. My good lord of Foix
Is learned in hawk and hound, and so my grews
Are valued at their worth.

*Sir Esp.* And dapple Dido,
That queen of palfreys ?

*Frois.* At my lord's charge too,
In this fair hostelry, at bed and board,
And well content as ease and oats can make her.

*Sir Esp.* How dost thou like the Court? Thou now hast had
Some three weeks' taste of it.

*Frois.* Surpassing well.—
In many a gentle court of Duke and King,
Renowned for pageant, or for polity
Or gallant feat of arms, I 've been, thou know'st,
An often inmate and familiar,—
As my good lord of Savoy's, my lord Count's
Of Luxembourg, Duke Galeas' of Milan,
Edward's of England, the right merry courts
Of Charles of France and David Bruce of Scotland,
And many more, but never saw me one
Did like me near so well.

*Sir Esp.* Ha ! ha ! I guessed so,
When I had felt thy vein. Thou likest to hear
Of marvels, and of news from far-off parts.

*Frois.* In truth I do : Your Mandevilles and Oderics
Have supped at Cambeleth with the great Khan,
And seen the golden peacocks hoist their tails

By devilish art, and clap their wings and scream,
To cheer the royal health !—or been to Fuco,
Where cocks and hens grow wool instead of feathers !
Or i' the kingdom of King Daldilus,
Where bats be big as crows and mice as mastives !—
Caroused with the Tibetians, make them cups
Of their dead father's skull !—or visited
The Lucomorians, by the river Oby,
Do yearly in November die like frogs,
And like the silkworm come alive in April !—
Seen the Pygmæans, in their city Cakam,
But three spans high !—or been i' th' isle where virgins
Breed serpents, so that none may spouse with them
While they be maids, lest he be stung to death,
Until the Cadiber with mystic rite
By one night's space hath exorcised the bride !
Truly, Sir Knight, to list such far-off news
It likes me passing well.

*Sir Esp.* And there be here
Pilgrims and priests, minstrels and traffickers.
On every sea, frequent as flies at midsummer
Buzz in a butcher's stall ! And then, methinks,
For a grave clerk and chronicler, thou lovest
Mirth and good cheer in reason.

*Frois.* Since the day
I scrawled me schoolboy, ever would mine ear
Quicken 't at the uncorking of a flask.
I love to look on jousts and tournaments—
To follow hawk or hound—to list fair minstrelling
In hall or lady's bower—in a brave chamber,

By taper's blaze, to look on merry dance,
Or share the midnight feast—and as I spice
My night-draught of rare Bordeaux or Rochelle,
To hear gay gallants boast their gentle gestes
Of arms or of amour: And is 't not reason?

*Sir Esp.* In knight or squire, methinks; but in a clerk—
A godly clerk—the canon of Chimay—
The sober chronicler!

*Frois.* Tut, tut! Sir Knight:
How can he chronicle of knights or dames
Looks at them from a cell?

*Sir Esp.* I grant me thine 's
The truer way and merrier. But arede me
How doth my lord of Foix entertain thee?
He is himself a brother of thy craft,—
One would be heard of i' the after-time,
Or I misguess. Doth he not court thee now
For a brave niche in thy rare history?

*Frois.* And reason that he should; and by my troth
He 'll have it too. O' noons—for 'tis high noon,
Thou knowest, before my lord doth quit his chamber—
From out my chronicle, whereof he hath
A marvellous great delight, commending it
As that for matter and fair language is
The wonder of this age, I read to him:
And then o' nights, he bids his courtiers round
In a fair circle while I read aloud
From my delectable and gay romaunt
Hight *Meliador*, wherein I 've posied me
The songs and sonnets, carols and virelays

Of my good lord Count Wenceslaus of Luxembourg,
With some fair matter of my own. Then followeth
The midnight banquet, with bright torches blazing,
Rich cates and costly wines ;—and so to bed.
In sooth, Sir Knight, it is a merry life,
And one contents me well.

*Sir Esp.* Is not the Count
A right accomplished gentleman ?

*Frois.* A point device :
For wit, for largess, and for courtesy,
I have not found his peer. But, Sir Espagne,
Now it remembers me, there be some passages
In my lord's life I 've heard me whispered darkly,
And fain would know from thee : In special, one
Whereof no man will freely answer me,
But shakes his head—looks round him warily,
With finger on his lip—then quits me suddenly.

*Sir Esp.* What passage dost thou mean ?

*Frois.* That tragedy
Of his near kinsman, Peter of Ernaut,
So gallantly maintained that Castle, Lourde—
Thou showed 't me on our way from Pamiers—
Against the Duke of Anjou and the French
For his true lord, Edward of Acquitaine—
Him, his commanded guest, 'tis said he poniarded
At meat at his own table ! Of a knight
So gentle and so courteous, 'tis methinks
A tale cannot be true.

*Sir Esp.* Hast ever seen
My Lord of Foix angry ?—

*Frois.* Never.

*Sir Esp.* Bide then
Until thou hast ; and sooth 'twill not be long—
I've in my budget news will raise a hurricane
Enough to blow stone walls and steeples down.

*Frois.* Ha ! there is matter then. I pray thee tarry
Till I have fetched my tablets.

*Sir Esp.* Nay, as yet,
Good master Froissart, 'tis not worth the chronicling,
Albeit, with time and circumstance, it may
Endow a tale, perchance a tragedy.

*Frois.* Beseech thee, tell me it.

*Sir Esp.* His son, Count Gaston,
Hath ta'en a longing fit to see his mother,
And so hath crossed the Pyrenees—that 's all—
Without his father's leave.

*Frois.* Pshaw ! is that all ?

*Sir Esp.* Nor more nor less. But hast thou never known
A speck i' the sky turn out a thunder-cloud ?

*Frois.* And that 's another riddle, now I think on 't—
Pray thee expound it me. She 's in Navarre,
My lady Countess, these three years, they tell me.
Why tarries she so long ?

*Sir Esp.* Because, I guess me,
She hath not sped i' th' errand she was sent on—
Nor may not back without.

*Frois.* What errand, prithee ?

*Sir Esp.* To work a miracle,

*Frois.* To work a miracle !

*Sir Esp.* To win her evil brother of Navarre
To keep his promise or to quit his debt?
*Frois.* To quit what debt?
*Sir Esp.* A fifty thousand crowns
He stands impawned in to my lord of Foix,
For ransom of his cousin, Lord D'Albret.
*Frois.* But how doth that concern my lady Countess?
*Sir Esp.* 'Twas at her instancy enforced with passion,
That he should hold her brother's faith in doubt—
My lord released her kinsman of Albret.
Her brother failing to redeem his pledge,
Her warranty's forfault; and she hath gone
To Pampeluna, on a sleeveless errand,
Discharged return till she bring back with usury
These fifty thousand crowns.
*Frois.* Beshrew me now,
For knight so gentle as my lord of Foix,
It was ungently done. Doth he not love her?
*Sir Esp.* Nor fear me, never did. Thou 'st seen at Court
Sir Yvain of Lescar.
*Frois.* His bastard son,
Is 't not?
*Sir Esp.* The same. On Florence of Lescar,
Sir Yvain's mother, he hath squandered long
The love he owes to Agnes of Navarre.
*Frois.* His son, Count Gaston, is i' the Armagnese
On visit to his 'trothèd bride, they tell me,
The sister of my lord of Armagnac.
*Sir Esp.* Whence he hath passed without his father's permit
To Pampeluna to his uncle's Court,

To crave his mother's blessing ere he wed ;
And that 's mine errand here, to make excuse
For this his grave offence.

*Frois.* **Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !**

*Sir Esp.* Nay, master Froissart, 'tis no laughing matter
For me, I warrant thee. An my lord hap
To have his falchion handy for the nonce,
God grant this neck may own a head to-morrow !

*Frois.* **Amen, Sir knight !**

*Sir Esp.* But I must stand the venture.
And so farewell ! [*Exit* Sir Espagne de Leon.

*Frois.* With time and circumstance
To ripen it, this journey to Navarre
May birth events, so hints Espagne de Leon,
Shall furnish matter for a worthy page,
In my right high and noble history.
'Tis worth the waiting for,—and then the Castle
Is a rare hostelry ! The whole year long
There 's mirth and minstrelsy, and wassail in 't,
And marvellous good cheer ! [*Exit.*

---

## Scene Second.

THE SAME—AN APARTMENT IN THE CASTLE OF MONÇADA.

(*Enter the* Count of Foix.)

*Count.* My Gaston's marriage with this Armagnese
Contents me every way. 'Twill stanch the feud

These hundred years hath trod our Gascon farms
To battle-fields, and fouled our fair Garonne
With the best blood of Foix and Armagnac.
She 's fair, they say, my daughter-in-law to be—
Gentle withal, and of so merry heart,
That men have named her the gay Armagnese.
So much the better—it will spare my son
That curse of curses, that domestic devil,
A she state-counsellor—diplomacy
In coif and farthingale. 'T was hence I loved
Fair Florence of Lescar, and over one too
Her beauty 's all ways equal ; for that, when
I' th' camp or council, fretted or forspent,
I would in bower unbend, she ne'er would worry me
With high concerns of state, or argument
Of graver matter than betwixt two ribbons
Which had the fairer colour—of two ballads
Which had the prettier tune—of two gallants
Who had the shapelier leg, or lustier carriage
I' th' dance or tournament ; while my proud Countess—
Would I were rid of her ! And but she is
The mother of my son—

(*Enter a servant.*)

*Servant.* My Lord ! a messenger
Come from his highness the Lord Duke of Anjou.

(*Hands a letter and exit.*)

*Count.* And what would Anjou ? (*Reads*) 'From our royal nephew,
The county of Bigorre '—A royal present !
'To hold of France '—The tenure likes me not—

'Castle of Malvoisin'—Pshaw! that 's free land
And needs no holding—and besides I claim me it,'
As rightliest mine own—(*Reading to himself*),
'hum-hum-for services
Rendered the crown of France, and more in special—
Summary justice on thy traitor kinsman,
Sir Peter of Ernaut'—
(*Dashes the letter violently on the ground.*)
That cursed name!
Must it for ever haunt me? Must I read it
On every page, hear it in every wind,
Dream on 't by night, and think on 't all day long!
E'er since I did it, men look strangely on me,
Askant and scowlingly, and they that wait on me
Do 't hurriedly of fear—i' the banquet hall,
My guests do use a more restrained mirth,
And fence their phrase, as if they feared my sword,
At one misordered word, would from its scabbard
Into the speaker's heart! Despite my penances,
Masses and matins, noctums, orisons,
Building of churches, visiting of shrines,
Piling of relics, pensioning of priests,
And the quietus they would quack me with,
It will not come, oblivion of that act—
That foul unknightly act!
Then, for my dealing with my dame, methinks
I read reproval in the looks of men,
Albeit, save father Nicholas, none hath dared
To give his thought a tongue. Even my son Gaston—
But let the boy beware, lest he do stumble

Upon a sleeping cockatrice. Ha! rather
Memento'd here—(*taking up the Duke of Anjou's letter.*)
Be on the ware thyself,
Count Gaston of Monçada! lest that devil
Did rule the fiery planet at thy birth
Mad thee to do some second deed shall damn
All hope of honour and fair memory!
There 's special cause why I should muzzle now
The devil dangers me. I have for guest
One of those chroniclers whose pen can make
Or mar a memory; and he 's agape
For matter to endow his history.
I must speak Froissart fair. There be some passages
Of my past life I would not have him chronicle
Till he hath read them by my glossary.
But I must give this Frenchman Duke his answer. [*Exit.*

---

## Scene Third.

AN APARTMENT IN THE SAME.

(FLORENCE OF LESCAR *and* SIR YVAIN.)

*Florence.* Ha! ha! ha!
To Pampeluna, didst thou say, Yvain,
To crave his mother's blessing? Ha! ha! ha!
What devil prompted him?
*Sir Yvain.* I own the prompting,
But relish not the name thou givest the prompter.

*Flor.* Thou prompt him? thou, Yvain!—to that thou know'st
Will be adjudged him treason.
*Sir Yv.* Nay, I did
But harp me on a string I knew he loved,
But harped thereon so deftly and so long
That wishing grew to act, yet seemed the act
The native of his will, for which the willer
Must bide the reckoning.
*Flor.* But thou, Yvain,
How didst thou 'scape attending upon him?
*Sir Yv.* His lady mother never could abide me.
I urged me that.
*Flor.* Oh! thou 'st uncorked a hurricane.
I tremble for thee.
*Sir Yv.* Poh! I 'll make that hurricane
Obey my piloting, and take a course
Wherein and welcome it may blow its most.
Thou know'st my father ne'er could love or hate
Within the mark of reason. There be two
He hates in chief—his Countess and her brother
Charles of Navarre; and now that his son Gaston
Is climbing unto man, o' late I 've marked me
He 's jealous of him too, as one inclines
To the faction of Navarre, and construes ever
His words and acts jaundiced with this suspicion.
That was the ground I built on: I contrived
This journey to Navarre; but thou dost guess me.
*Flor.* Ay, my brave boy! and prophesy, despite
The mumming priest with bell and breviary,

And the coifed lawyer with his coil of sheepskin,
Thou shalt die Count of Foix and Bierne,
And Florence of Lescar.—

*Sir Yv.* Ere long in right,
Be that so long she 's been in realty.

(*Enter a servant.*)

*Servant.* The Count, Sir Yvain, hearing thou 'rt returned
From Armagnac, would speak thee instantly.

*Sir Yv.* I wait on him. (*Exit servant.*)

*Flor.* Yvain, there 's haste in that:—
Thy father 's restive. Hath he learned, think'st thou,
That thou 'st reported me?

*Sir Yv.* He hath for certain.
Gaston despatched, post haste, with his excuse,
Espagne de Leon. 'Twas my cue to follow
Whenas I knew the metal I would work on,
Had reached the red of heat.

*Flor.* My clever boy!
But work it warily, Yvain!—warily.
Thy father hath a head—when it is cool.
Thou dost not mean to speak in aggravance.

*Sir Yv.* Fy! that were shallow policy. I am
My brother's pleader and apologer,—
And I will plead for him to such good purpose
As many a pleader doth, whose client's cause
Is for his pains by just so much the loser!

*Flor.* Ha! ha! thou 'rt ripe; 'tis time thou left'st thy nest.
Betake thee to the wing and to the woods;
Thou need'st no lesson from the mother-bird.

[*Exit* FLORENCE OF LESCAR.

*Sir Yv.* (*solus.*) I am the elder, and the heir, but for
This inky-drop, as priests and heralds preach,
Doth course invisibly my bastard's veins,
And taint the bosomed well-spring of my blood—
This blot of bastardy. Of bastardy!
Pshaw! Pshaw!
In these our learned times, that 's not a rag-staff
Will fright our very crows. Henry of Transtamare
Kinged it o'er Spain, Don John in Portugal,
Yet were they bastards both:—the ancestor
Of that Black Prince, the fiery Englishman,
Edward of Acquitaine—William of Normandy,
Who conquered England and who rules it still
In his posterity, he too was bastard-born;
And for your Dane, your Swede, or your Norwegian,
With him the bastard kings for preference.
This mole-mark, then—this bastardy 's no bar,
Were but this boy removed. And to that issue,
Knowing the natures I 've to deal withal,
Out of this journey to Navarre I 'll shape me
In one my victim and mine instrument.
Then for this marriage. She 's a winsome wench,
That merry Armagnese. I scarce can tell
Which of the two I grudged my brother most,
His birthright or his bride. But I have ordered
His conduct there, and turned his shyness so
To argument of laughter, th' Armagnese
Have writ him surely in their kalendar
For simple and a fool. And for the lady,
Or I have shallowly perused her sex,

The merry damsel will not break her heart
To take the bolder brother for exchange,
Albeit, though first to enter on the daylight,
He came toll-free, nor paid Sir Priest for passage.

[*Exit.*

---

## Scene Fourth.

SCENE CHANGES TO PAMPELUNA.

(*Enter* GASTON *and* GRATIAN, *as newly arrived from a journey.*)

*Gratian.* Ha! ha! ha! But, fy! I'll have thine oath to it.
I'll not believe me 't else. What! not a kiss?
Not one poor kiss?

*Gaston.* Not one.

*Gratian.* Not o' the cheek?
Nor on the brow—the hand—the tip o' th' finger, then?

*Gaston.* Nor ne'er had speech of her, save *yea* and *nay*,
To formal question, during our sojourn.

*Gratian.* But yea or nay! Ha! ha! beshrew me, Gaston,
It was the strangest wooing—yea and nay!
Then, an her tongue be Quaker, her two eyes
Are of another faith, I'll swear to it.
Graces and goddesses! how they did talk!
In five short minutes, they will practise you
The complete art of rhetoric—move—persuade—
Convince—be gay—be tender—or be terrible:

Nay, nay ! not terrible—to give the devil
His due, I never saw him in her ogling.

*Gaston.* Didst thou not say her eye was very bright ?
And kindly too ?

*Gratian.* Ay, as the brightest orb
Doth sparkle in the frosty firmament,
Though not so cold, for it is blithe withal ;
It made me turn a Parsee for the nonce,
And make religion to 't.

*Gaston.* Her teeth, methought,
Showed of a pearly pureness.

*Gratian.* Maybe, maybe—
I never got so far. I ne'er could pass me
The doors to them—those rich and ruby valves.
Such lips ! didst ever see such lips ? Rememberest thou
One Doctor Ovid—so I think they called him—
That Father Nicholas o' long winter nights
Would tell us of ?

*Gaston.* Ovid ! a conjuror, was 't not ?

*Gratian.* The same.—Turned Sir Actæon, was, I think,
Some knight of England, to a stag, for peeping
Into a lady's bath.

*Gaston.* And changed fair damsels
To birds and bushes.

*Gratian.* And sometimes to cows.
I 'll tell thee what, Gaston, I ne'er could look
On those rare lips but I did call to mind
That Doctor Ovid, wishing me his rod
To turn them into flowers, roses, or jessamines,
On some fair thicket's edge, and me the while

Into a benedict bee or butterfly
Humming my honeymoon, while I did pillage
Their hoard of sweetness the live summer-day.
And then her ankle! Thou didst mark her ankle,
Didst thou not, Gaston?

*Gaston.* I did catch the twinkle
Of one small foot; but she, methought, o' th' sudden
Withdrew it angrily.

*Gratian.* O Gaston! Gaston!
And she thy bride, man! not one kiss! But tell me
In confidence, honestly, and on thine honour,
Didst never squeeze her hand?

*Gaston.* No, Gratian.

*Gratian.* Wert thou afraid of her?

*Gaston.* Shame-faced perhaps,
A thought or so. But no, it was not that
Was mainest cause. I saw her but on ceremony
And before witnesses.

*Gratian.* Ha! ha! 'twas she then
That was afraid of thee.

*Gaston.* My brother Yvain
Instructed me that gentle usages
And formalties of Court did so require it:
But then each day he passed between us two
With gentle courtesies and gage of love.

*Gratian.* Oho! he did; and thou didst court and kiss
By deputy, forsooth!

*Gaston.* Fy! Gratian! kiss.

*Gratian.* Wert thou not jealous—now, confess me honestly,
Of my lord deputy?

*Gaston.* Of mine own brother!
Wouldst thou be jealous?
*Gratian.* Of my grandfather
In such an office. Now hang, draw, and quarter me,
If e'er my bride I court on court conditions,
So she be fair like thine.
*Gaston.* But now, dear Gratian,
Despite thy hate to courts and all their formalties,
Thou must to court with haste, to notify
Our sudden coming to my royal uncle,
And crave permission to attend my mother,
While I amend my dress.
*Gratian.* On one condition then—
That thou wilt name me for thy deputy
When next thou woo'st the lady Isabel.—
I will not tax thee for a salary,
But take my fees in kind. [*Exeunt.*

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## Scene Fifth.

THE SAME.—THE PALACE.

(*Enter* CHARLES OF NAVARRE *and the* COUNTESS OF FOIX.)

*Charles.* Sister, no more—my purpose is unchanged:
It is my vowed resolve.
*Countess.* To perjure thee!
To fail thine honour as a Christian knight,
Thy promise as a king, and lend dishonour
Thy name for synonyme!

*Charles.* Dishonour, sister!

*Countess.* Didst thou not pawn thine honour to my husband
To pay these fifty thousand crowns to him,
For ransom of our cousin of Albret?

*Charles.* 'Twas mere extortion.

*Countess.* Be it so adjudged;
It taxeth not thy coffers. Since his marriage
With Bourbon's heiress, D'Albret hath sent it thee.
Thou dost but hold it for my husband's use,
As his conveyancer.

*Charles.* Sister, thou knowest
Usage requires thy dower should have remained
For safety in mine hand, thy nearest kinsman's.
It hath not so been left. 'Tis this just sum,
Which I will hold instead, and which, I swear,
Shall ne'er depart the kingdom of Navarre.

*Countess.* My lord! my lord! this shallow varniture
Doth ill beseem the using of a King
To gloss unkingly act.

*Charles.* Name 't as thou wilt—
I 've told thee my resolve, which I uphold
Against all questioners.

*Countess.* Then, fare thee well:
I quit Navarre to-morrow.

*Charles.* Art thou mad?
Thou would'st not back to Orthes!

*Countess.* 'Tis my purpose.

*Charles.* To face that insane homicide, thy husband,
And have thee poniarded next day at table,
Like Peter of Ernaut!

*Countess.* Befall what may,
Brother, to-morrow I depart for Orthes.

*Charles.* Hast ta'en a longing fit to see thy husband—
Thy handsome husband, *Phœbus* of Monçada—
As for his beauty they have christened him?
Methinks the fifty winters that have frosted him,
And twenty years of wedlock, might have blunted
Somewhat thy longing's edge.

*Countess.* Brother, thy jest
Is stingless as 'tis rude. Twenty sad years
Of wrongs and cruelty have long suppressed
Each softer feeling there.

*Charles.* Then, why return to him?
What owest thou him?

*Countess.* My duty, and my son—
That gentle son, whose love o'erpays me all
The wrongs and scorn of his ungentle father—
Him would I see. That is my longing, brother.

*Charles.* May he not come to thee?

*Countess.* For two long years,
It is a boon we both have humbly sued for,
But sued in vain.

*Charles.* Then do thy pleasure in 't:
But, choose thee how thou wilt, abide or pass,
Not one poor denier shall depart Navarre
For ransom of D'Albret.

(*Enter a servant.*)

*Servant.* My lord the King!
Thy nephew, the young Count of Foix, come
Upon the sudden from the Armagnese,

Craves audience, with permission to attend
His lady mother.

*Countess.* What! saidst thou my son?
Gaston of Foix—didst thou say 'twas he?

*Servant.* Madam, 'tis he! [*Exit servant.*

*Countess.* Oh! this is joy unhoped for!

*Charles.* Go to him, sister. When thou hast unloaded thee
A mother's lips of kisses, I will follow,
To give my nephew welcome to Navarre.

[*Exit* Countess of Foix.

*Charles* (*solus.*) So then I hold me in my grasp of grace
Thine heir, Monçada! of all men the man
I ever hated most! My Queen—her brothers,
The Dukes of Anjou, Burgundy, and Berry—
The Constable of France—I hated them,
But none of them like thee! The Constable,
Charles de la Cerda, and my Queen, are quiet—
They 'll not disturb me more! Nor would not, ye
Proud sons of France! nor your boy-nephew King,
But for that booby bungling Englishman
Did mar my goodly scheme i' the executing.
But none of these did I so hate as thee,
Gaston of Foix? Thou hast wronged my sister;
But that 's a trifle. I could pardon that.
Thou dost but use thy dame as I did mine,
And it might pass. So might thy prisoning
Of Henry of Albret. But there are reckonings
Betwixt us twain will not be quit so soon!
Even from our boyhood, in whatever field
I sought to pluck me honour and renown—

I' th' court or camp, the council or the field,
Where soul did soul, or nerve did challenge nerve—
Thou wert my counterer still, and he alone
Did give me constant foil. Oh! I have treasured me
Burning remembrances, and sown my pillow
With midnight curses, and with morning vows,
Which, save thy life's-blood, nought can satisfy.
Was it kind heaven, or kinder hell, I marvel,
Sent me this boy so opportunely hither?
Howe'er that be, and whosoe'er the sender,
It is an instrument doth challenge use,
And I will use it to a purpose pays me
The debt of years with hoarded usury!
Ay (*musing*), thus—or thus. But, ere I settle me
Manner or circumstance, 'twere well I knew
The edge and temper of the tool wherewith
I am to work. I will go read my nephew. [*Exit.*

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## Scene Sixth.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THE PALACE.

(*Enter* ISABEL OF ARMAGNAC *in a travelling dress, as if just arrived from a journey.*)

Heigho! heigho! I've reached me here at last,
This weary place—this Pampeluna—on
My wild-goose errand! Oh, dear! dear! At home,
They used to call me the gay Armagnese
And merry Isabel. After my travels,

When I get back, they 'll change the style, and call me
Mad Isabel—the crazy Armagnese.
Heigho ! what took me here ? Let me consider—
Was 't love ? No—no : I 'm sure it was not love.
What could it be then ? Curiosity ?
Ay, curiosity—just curiosity—
Nothing but curiosity ! They say
Our sex are curst with curiosity,
And it hath fallen on me. Ah ! merry Isabel !
'Tis for that thou art merry, and they deem thee
Too merry to be wise—they use thee so—
To wed thee with a fool ! Marry a fool !
There is a pill, my merry Isabel,
To purge thy merriment ? Heigho ! heigho !
Marry an idiot ! But that they say
Is no impediment ; nay, some have sured me,
And given shrewd logic for 't, that they for preference
Would wed an idiot ! Faugh ! faugh ! were he
Ten thousand Counts of Foix and Bierne,
I 'd live on bread and water in a cell,
Hug me a husband made of wood or wax,
Hire me for barmaid at an hostelry,
Buy me a beard, and take me to the wars ;
I 'd beg, dig, steal, starve, rob, do anything,
Rather than have a slavering fool to fondle me,
And call me duck, or dove, or dame, or darling !
But softly, Isabel ! Art thou quite sure
He is a fool ? The lunatic messages
He sent me daily by his brother Yvain,
And would not come himself—his strange behaviour

Whene'er we chanced to meet, as though he had
Been dummy born, or bound a parish prentice
To glum Pythagoras—do all confirm me,
That hint Sir Yvain dropped, at unaware,
That they have bartered me to patch a peace
Betwixt my brother and the Count of Foix,
By marrying of this moon-calf !—huxtering me
As though I were a matter of tariff,
A bale of buckram, or a bag of pepper,
A hide of parchment, not a hide that houseth
Live Christian flesh and blood ?—and all for that
I am not curst or cross, but merry Isabel !
And yet, when I did look me on his eye,
His gentle smile, his fair and open brow,
Methought I could espy me nothing there
Told of the idiot—nought but tokened mind
Mated with modesty, whose fair impress
Did stamp it on my softened memory,
Asleeping or awake ! Then, Heaven forgive me !
Brave, witty, handsome, courteous, though he be,
I do not like that brother of his, Sir Yvain ;
I 'm sure he is not honest. He would still,
Methought, be wooing me, not for his brother,
But for himself. 'Tis this I would unriddle,
And be the judge myself, if he I 'm trothed to
Be a fool, yea or nay. And 'tis, methinks,
For my mad plot of she-knight errantry
A fair excuse and fitting argument,
Though it do somewhat strain my maiden's courage,
And challenge rude opinion. [*Exit.*

# ACT II.

## Scene First.

PAMPELUNA—THE PALACE.

(*A Laboratory or Philosopher's Study, with books, bottles, alembics, furnaces, etc.,* GIOVANNI OF ACQUAVIVA *gazing thoughtfully on the fragments of a vessel scattered over the floor as newly burst.*)

So that experiment for the third time
Hath given me foil! My still is blown to fragments,
And by no mightier engin'ry than smoke,
The angry vapour of imprisoned water!
Oh! what a thunder power doth lodge 't within
That simple element—could I but tame 't
To do me ministering! Methinks therewith
Rocks might be ground to dust; mountains dispersed;
Ships hold their course on equinoctial seas
Nor ask which wind doth blow; the freighted waggon
On steamy pinion shoot along its path,
And spare the panting steed—and space and time
Need them new names and notes to reckon by!
Alas! 'tis but a dream! so are they all—

My fastings, watchings, and experiments,
By day and night, these long, long forty years!
Where is the fruit? I have but gathered me
A few chance shells upon the ocean shore;
I have but cropped me a few heather-bells
At the tall mountain's foot; I have but plucked me
A few stray leaves on the wide forest's edge;
I have but snatched a mouthful of the stream
As, hurrying past me, it did onward, onward
Roll its perpetual fulness to the sea!
And how hath man requited me? With hate—
Pris'ning, proscribing, exile, infamy,
The brand of magic and the curse of heresy!
For crimes unthought—for acts impossible—
Denounced, defamed, and excommunioned!
That now no Christian roof dares shelter me
Save of this evil King—and he but yields it
Oh! how too dearly bought! Wisely and well
They crowned thee, Courage, queen of all the virtues:—
For, but I lack the martyr's nerve, and shrink
To face the doom, cruel and infamous,
Is meted him whom the fool multitude
Decree a sorcerer, I would not draw
Another breath under this roof accursed!

(*Knocking heard at the door of the apartment.*)

But who comes here? The tempter fiend himself
I 've pawned my soul to, for my mess of pottage!
When he 's abroad, the devil hath a doing—
What hell-work is toward!

(*Opens the door, and* CHARLES OF NAVARRE *enters.*)

*Charles.* Ha, Giovanni!
As ever on thy nest!—still hatching, hatching!
One egg-shell burst, I see! But thou hast gotten
The chick that it did go with.
*Giov.* 'Twas unripe;
The shell was burst too soon.
*Charles.* Another time
Thou shalt have better luck. I have o' late
Showed truant, thine unfrequent visitor;
Not that I hold me in a waned esteem
The matter or the master; but that cares,
That ever canopy the couch of kings,
Were on the rife with me. But thou, I doubt not,
Hast riched the interval, and added more
Unto thy much already. What discovery
Hast thou to news me with?
*Giov.* My lord! with none.
Nature is coy. Discoveries come not fast
As summer flowers in May.
*Charles.* No new-found mineral!
Nor no old herb, with new discovered virtues?
No subtle essence; no amalgam rare—
Doth add new form of faculty to man,
Mysterious ministers to do his bidding
Deadly or sanative!
*Giov.* My lord, of such
Have I of late made no discovery.
*Charles.* Fy! fy! thou 'rt fallen into the barren vein,
Thou still hadst something new and curious
To witch my wonder by.

*Giov.* Knowledge hath limits,
And mine hath narrow ones. In the exhibiting,
A life-long's treasures will usurp some time—
Each several day's acquiring is too small
To yield a separate show.

*Charles.* How didst thou name 't,
That cunning powder that thou gavest me of
Some two years gone?

*Giov.* What powder, good your Highness?
I gave of several sorts: Was 't kindly?

*Charles.* No:
It was in act most sudden and most deadly—
Thou dost remember it?

*Giov.* I gave of many;
For thou wert ever curious in poisons,
Still tasking me for new.

*Charles.* But this, Giovanni,
I speak of, was the sovereignest. For sure
And stealthy suddenness it passed them all.
Dost not remember it? Thou gavest me it
In a slight leathern purse.

*Giov.* Oh! that I gave thee
Some two days ere thy noble dame the Queen
Took her death-illness suddenly?

*Charles.* My memory
Serves me not there. 'Twas that same year, however:
I had of it again.

*Giov.* That week, was 't not,
Lacerda died, the Constable of France?

*Charles.* Maybe, maybe; I do not mind the time.

*Giov.* There was no more of it. And I remember me,
Some months thereafter, on thine earnest prayer,
A long week's space I toiled me night and day
To have of 't ready ere that Englishman
Departed hence for France.

*Charles.* What Englishman?

*Giov.* Thy cook, that some time after, on suspicion
Of practice to take off the King of France
By poison, and the Royal Dukes, his uncles,
Was hanged at Paris.

*Charles.* Pshaw! in days and dates
A tapster's dame might envy thee thy memory!
It is that powder; let me have of it.

*Giov.* I gave thee largely of it—is it spent?

*Charles.* Or lost. I 'm careless in such things.

*Giov.* 'Tis costly.

*Charles.* Set thine own price upon 't.

*Giov.* It takes long time
In the compounding.

*Charles.* But thou hast, I know,
Already mixed.

*Giov.* 'Tis perilous to toy with;
A finger's pinch is death.

*Charles.* I know its quality,
And will be wary with 't.

*Giov.* My lord, I doubt me
If there be left of it. I think me not.

*Charles.* Pshaw! pshaw! I know there is. Go look for it.
I will return anon. (*Seems as going, and aside.*)

He 's getting restive.
I 'll bring him to his wits. (*Returns.*)
I had forgot me
One thing, Giovanni; and in truth it was
My chiefest errand here:—Thou must to Rome.
*Giov.* To Rome, my lord!—to Rome!
*Charles.* Ay, Giovanni.
A learned man, the Bishop of Viterbo,
Commissioned hither by our Holy Father,
Urban the Sixth—
*Giov.* Urban, my lord! Thou 'rt not
An Urbanist, art thou? I thought me ever
Thou wert a Clementist.
*Charles.* This worthy Bishop,
With learned reasons, hath much staggered me—
I fear he 's right. 'Tis mortal sin, thou knowest,
If he 's Heaven's true vicegerent, to deny him.
Thou must with this good man to the Vatican,
To purge thee of a foolish charge whereof
To th' Holy See some one 's delated thee.
*Giov.* My lord, my lord! thou wouldst not send thy servant
To certain death, wouldst thou?
*Charles.* Death! Giovanni!
Art thou a heretic then?
*Giov.* My lord, I 'm none,
If I be fairly judged.
*Charles.* Or sorcerer?
*Giov.* Neither, my lord.
*Charles.* Why need'st thou fear, then,

To go to either Avignon or Rome,
And front which Pope soever, Urban or Clement?
Their calling 's merciful. They 've chose them names
Declare their gentleness.

*Giov.* My lord! my lord!
Thou dost not know that proud Italian,
Bloody Prignano. Ah! too well I know him!
He was my schoolmate, and hath ever been
As priest, as prelate, and as Pope, mine enemy.

*Charles.* He would not burn thee, Giovanni! would he?

*Giov.* As sure, my lord, as I did cross the Tiber.
Did he not shamefully put to the torture
Even his own Cardinals,—to mock their agony,
Reading the while aloud his breviary!
Nay, like ungospelled Turk—more horrible still—
Bind them in sacks, and pitch them in the sea![1]
When I did fix me here, thou swarest to me
Protection from all enemies.

*Charles.* Ay, Giovanni,
But guessed me not the Pope was of the number.
I told the worthy Bishop of that promise,
And he but laughs at it. It binds me not,
He doth assure me, made unto a heretic,
Cut off from Holy Church. He will absolve me.

*Giov.* My lord, he cannot, nor no mortal man.

*Charles.* 'Ware thee, Giovanni! 'Ware thee! There, methought,

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[1] '*O most barbarous urbanity!*' is Fuller's characteristic comment on the act here referred to—the drowning of five of his Cardinals by Pope Urban the Sixth.

Thou didst smack somewhat of the heretic—
Prignano would not roast his school-fellow!

*Giov.* In youth, he envied me; he hates me now:
He is my judge, and he is merciless.

*Charles.* Dost thou then truly think thy life 's to hazard
If thou be sent to Rome?

*Giov.* My lord, I do.

*Charles.* Well, well then, Giovanni, be my friend,
Assist me with thy counsel and thine art,
And I 'll not render thee, though either Pope
Came posting hither on his hottest bull
From Rome or Avignon demanding thee
For oil to feed his bonfire. Pray thee, go
Look for that powder. I 'll be back anon.

[*Exit* CHARLES.

*Giov.* Merciful Heaven! Here 's to choose betwixt!
Charles or the Pope! the devil or the hangman—
To poison others, or be burnt myself! [*Exit.*

---

## Scene Second.

THE SAME—ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE PALACE.

(*Enter the* COUNTESS OF FOIX *and* ISABEL OF ARMAGNAC.)

*Countess.* Ha! ha! ha! Now, fy upon thee, Isabel!
'Tis a mad whim, fit only to endow
Romaunt or minstrel's tale! Abide with me
Here in Navarre. I would not lose so soon

A daughter dropped o' th' sudden from the clouds,
And soon as seen beloved. I need thy comforting,
Now that my son departs. Pray thee, no more of it—
'Tis a mad whim.
*Isabel.* I 've set my heart thereon ;
Beseech thee humour it.
*Countess.* Thou 'lt not believe me then,
A mother's vouching is not good in law ;
She is too near of kin.
*Isab.* Nay, honoured lady !
Thou dost me wrong. I do in truth believe
Thy son, Count Gaston—
*Countess.* Is not just a moon-calf—
Ha ! ha ! ha !
Not quite an idiot—but still—
*Isab.* But still
Whom I, in Holy Church, at Heaven's own altar,
Must pledge me soon my vows and virgin truth
To love and honour, and my life-long after
Cleave to in well and woe, him would I judge me
And for myself—his head, heart, worthiness.
Is it not reason so ?
*Countess.* Alas ! it is.
Had I so judged, I had not wed at all,
Or I had wed prepared. 'Tis not for Gaston
I fear me aught : he 'll bide the trial, trust me.
'Tis for thyself, dear Isabel—so young—
Reared tenderly—experienceless—a woman—
*Isab.* Fy, no ! Thou dost forget—I am a man !—
A sprightly page, who, though he boast him not

The freehold of a beard, doth wear a belt,
And by that belt a sword—

*Countess.* For ornament,
Alas! not use. But if it must, it must;
And there's no time to lose. We must provide thee
Wardrobe shall mask thy mock virility,
And find some pretty name to answer to,
When Gaston calls his page.

*Isab.* Would thou went'st with us!

*Countess.* Alas! it may not be! On thy nativity
The stars looked kindlier. My gentle Isabel
Doth lot a gentle lord. Come to my chamber.

[*Exeunt.*

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## Scene Third.

THE SAME—THE STUDY OF GIOVANNI.

(*He is discovered seated at a table, with an open drawer before him, in a melancholy attitude, his head resting on his hand. Takes from the drawer a small leathern purse, and rises.*)

No, no—'tis vain! There is no remedy—
I have encoiled me in his damned web
Past rescue, past repent. So come thou forth,
Giver of sleep—of peace!
Revenge's minister—Despair's desire—
Remorse's cordial—Doubt's determiner—
Grief's opiate! Throughout this breathing world—

This weary, wicked world—how many thousands,
Thou panacy past price, would at this moment
Barter their all for thee! while I, to whom
Thou owest thy being—who could uncreate thee,
And bid thee sleep once more with formless essences
In the waste womb of possibility—
Would I had known thee never!
What friend is 't next, I marvel me, for whom
This love-gift is designed? Fy, fy!—'tis horrible:
It cannot be—his sister? Yet her presence,
I have o' late observed, doth weary him:
He would be rid of her, albeit he dares not
Dismiss her home to Orthes empty-handed.
But he is here.

(*Enter* CHARLES OF NAVARRE.)

*Charles.* Well, Giovanni, hast thou found me it—
That masterpiece of art?

*Giovanni.* There 's but this much of it;
And in compounding 'tis so perilous,
So subtle, and so opposite to life,
I've vowed me ne'er to mix of it again
On prayer of mortal man.

*Charles.* A foolish vow,
Giovanni, and a rash! But give me it.

*Giov.* Beseech your Highness, keep it heedfully.
On him who knows its mortal quality,
Should life take loss thereby, very incautiousness
Will draw a murderer's guilt.

*Charles.* I know 'tis deadly,
And will be chary in my dealing with 't.

But haste—haste! Giovanni, give me it—
I need it instantly—

(*Snatches the leathern purse from* GIOVANNI, *and, placing it in his girdle, exit hastily.*)

*Gior.* (*looking from the window after him*)—
Merciful Heaven!
Is that the victim!—that fair gentle boy!
His nephew too—his sister's only child—
His holy household guest! That I had known me it
But one short hour ago! O Giovanni!
Curst be the hour thou vowed'st that vow of pride
By Padua's learned lamp!—devoting thee,
How high soe'er the venture or the price,
To search what ocean, earth, or air hath in't
Of sovereign virtue or mysterious power
To help or harry life! Thy vow was sin;
It hath borne bitter fruit! With Cain's mark
Branded an outcast and a vagabond,
Without a home, a country, or an altar
Whereat thou darest to kneel! The holiest arts
Apting and using to accursed ends—
A wretch—a coward poisoner's murderous instrument.
Oh! might I warn that poor devoted boy!
I'll go entreat a moment's speech with him. [*Exit.*

## Scene Fourth.

THE SAME—ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE PALACE.

(*Enter* CHARLES OF NAVARRE *and* GASTON.)

*Charles.* Nay, nay, fair nephew! spare thy farther thanks.
In truth, thou owest me none. I but received thee,
Mine unknown kinsman, for thy mother's sake—
Now thou art known, I love thee for thyself—
And so thy welcome hath contented thee,
I am repaid with boot.

*Gaston.* Thy gifts, my lord,
Have put me on the blush in the accepting,
They so o'erpass my worth. And yet—for still
The pampered appetite will fret for more—
To send me home with full content, there lacks
The dearest boon of all.

*Charles.* What's that?

*Gaston.* My mother—
Pray thee, my lord, let her return with me.

*Charles.* It rests with her free choice: I bar her not.

*Gaston.* Then, good my lord, these fifty thousand crowns—
She may not, as thou know'st—

*Charles.* Beseech thee, nephew,
Forbear that matter.

*Gaston.* I am poor, my lord,
In present means—have nought I dare call mine,
Save but the blood that courseth through my veins;
Yet have I fair expectancies in hope—
I wed the sister of Count Armagnac,

Whose poorest portion is the dower she brings me ;
I am the heir of Foix and Bierne ;
And so thou darest but trust mine honour's gage,
Or written bond, with time, I will repay thee
With thanks and usury.

*Charles.* Nephew, I pray thee
Resolve me this one thing : Dost thou repute me
Is niggard of his coin ?

*Gaston.* My lord, I do not ;
It makes the marvel more.

*Charles.* This paltry sum—
These fifty thousand crowns—dost think them fee
Would bribe me to dishonour ?

*Gaston.* That, my lord,
Is it so puzzles me. Jewels and gems
Thy liberal love hath squandered them on me
As they were pebbles which the winter's brook
Hath strewn unheeded on a mountain strand,
Or shells that schoolboys purloin from the shore,
Which each new tide replaceth valueless !
No, no : thou art no niggard of thy gold.

*Charles.* What can it be then, Gaston ?

*Gaston.* Ay, my lord,
What can it be ?

*Charles.* Actions that show unkind
Derive ofttimes from love. Durst I unfold
The motive cause of that seems harsh to thee—
Morning and evening, in thine orisons
With grateful love, thou wouldst remember me ;
And yet I dare not do't.

*Gaston.* Not dare, my lord,
To tell me that, which known, I'd bless thee for!
*Charles.* Gaston, thy mother hath been wronged—
*Gaston.* I've heard so.
*Charles.* In part perchance; but no—they dared not tell thee
The whole, the damned worst. He hated her—
Held her to scorn.—He thrust her from his bed,
And placed a harlot there!
*Gaston.* He is my father:
But in that matter have I never been,
Nor will not now be, his apologer.
*Charles.* Shorn of the state and fair observancy
Became his wife, the daughter of Navarre,
He mewed her in a tower—he 's banished her;
And but she venture back, he 'll murder her!
*Gaston.* Banished, my lord! and murder!
*Charles.* Pray thee, pardon me—
Whene'er I think me on my sister's wrongs,
My blood and speech run wild! The phrase was blunt—
Yet was the sense too true. Her mission hither
Was practice and pretence.
*Gaston.* Practice—pretence?
*Charles.* That harlot's doing to be rid of her.
And should she back.—But I 'll defend me that—
*Gaston.* Then thy refusal all the while was also—
*Charles.* But practice and pretence. Had I not warrant
For this, mine act, howe'er uncharity,
With rude construction, might attaint my purpose?

*Gaston.* But should she back to Orthes now with me,
Who dares attempt her life?

*Charles.* Thy father, Gaston,
Is sudden in his rage.

*Gaston.* Not an assassin—

*Charles.* And yet he slew his kinsman and his guest
At his own table, Peter of Ernaut.

*Gaston.* My lord, that tragedy I 've wept me it
A thousand times, and so I doubt me not
Hath he with penance and atoning tears,
When no eye witnessed it.

*Charles.* In the Count's life—
I would not grieve thee with the telling them—
There have been passages of the like sort:—
But waive we that. There 's special cause at present
For special fear. The hate he bears thy mother
Hath not its growth from nature.

*Gaston.* How is that?

*Charles.* It is disease; the work of damned drugs.

*Gaston.* Of drugs, my lord—of drugs!

*Charles.* Is she more fair,
This Florence of Lescar to look upon
Than is my sister Agnes of Navarre?

*Gaston.* Therein, my lord, we are too near of blood
To truly judge; but to my partial seeing,
She 's not more fair.

*Charles.* The general eye affirms thee—
As fair, more wise, more noble, and more virtuous,
Thine injured mother is. His hate is not
Natural disgust, but drugged insanity—

As is the love he bears the harlot wrongs her
But philtered pharmacy.

*Gaston.* I 've heard of such things:
But is it possible?

*Charles.* Ay, such things are,
Gaston, and this is of them. I have proofs
Had dumbed a Sadducee.

*Gaston.* And is 't an evil
Defieth remedy?

*Charles.* No, nephew! no—
Thank Heaven for that! But art must 'counter art.
As came the cause, so must the cure, of medicine.

*Gaston.* Can medicine compass it? Can medicine work
That very miracle, and bid man's will
Against his will to love?

*Charles.* I know me one,
Who, not by magic, nor by muttered spells,
Nor waxen idol or forbidden means,
But by long study, and of simples culled
From nature's herbary, hath compounded him
A subtle powder, the which, being infused
I' the wine-cup, unperceived, of him doth drink it,
Will o' the sudden seize him with strong love
Of whosoe'er is at the moment named
When he doth use it.

*Gaston.* But dost thou believe this?

*Charles.* I do, and that so verily, my life
I 'll gage upon its virtue.

*Gaston.* Hath 't been proved?

*Charles.* Ay, oft and oft, and never hath it failed.

I 've toyed with it myself. Had my lord Count
One draught thereof, I had not doubted me
To send thy mother home.

*Gaston.* Upon high festivals,
I bear my father's cup ; and 'tis his wont,
When he hath supped, to health its second 'round
Still with my mother's name. So thou dare trust
A task so nice to so unpractised hand,
I will adventure it.

*Charles.* In truth, dear Gaston,
So thou do wish and will it honestly,
There liveth not whom it befits so well,
For thou dost love them both.

*Gaston.* Then lesson me
Touching its use. I 'll do it with my best.

*Charles.* It must be secret done ; and thou must swear
None shall be privy to our purpose, nor
The drug be used save where 'tis destined for.

*Gaston.* All this I swear, and swear it honestly.

*Charles.* Come to my closet, then—I 'll give it thee,
And full instruct thee in the using it. [*Exeunt.*

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## Scene Fifth.

ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE SAME.

(CHARLES OF NAVARRE *and* GASTON—*the former holding in his hand a small leathern purse.*)

*Charles.* So much is quite enough—it needs no more.
Conceal it heedfully ; and do not open it

Until the using—'tis so fine the powder,
It will escape else.

*Gaston.* I 'll remember me.

*Charles.* We 're interrupted ; quickly put it up.
(*Giving him the purse.*)
Thy mother comes to say farewell to thee.
I 'll see thee on thy way some league or two
Beyond our walls. [*Exit* CHARLES.

(*Enter* COUNTESS OF FOIX *and* ISABEL OF ARMAGNAC, *the latter dressed as a page.*)

*Countess.* Gaston, what purse was that ?

*Gaston.* Purse ?

*Countess.* Ay, that even now thine uncle gave to thee.

*Gaston.* Oh ! 'twas a purse—

*Countess.* That 's plain. The workmanship
Did not show passing rare. Methought it looked
Hardly a royal gift.

*Gaston.* A sorry casket
May hold a priceless gem. My royal uncle
Has been a very spendthrift of his love
And largess to me.

*Countess.* And that purse was then—

*Gaston.* The prized'st gift of all ; let that content thee,
Dear mother ; ask no more.

*Countess.* I think indeed
Thou 'st given love-powders to thine uncle, Gaston—
Thou hast bewitched him, and against the grain,
And custom of his nature, made him play
The very prodigal. Thou might'st, methinks,

Thou hast such grace at Court, have won from him
These fifty thousand crowns, and thereby purchased
Thy mother of thy party home to Orthes.

*Gaston.* That were a joy indeed! But, rest thee sure,
That ere the changing of another moon,
I will attend her thither.

*Countess.* Art thou mad,
To talk so, Gaston!—when thy very journey
To see me here will but incense, thou know'st,
Against us both, still more my banisher?

*Gaston.* Before one month has past, I pledge me thou
Shalt be again in Orthes.

*Countess.* 'Twas thy youth,
Alas! spake there—thy green unpractised youth,
Which gilds the dark and hopes th' impossible.

*Gaston.* Nay, nay,—I speak it with advisement, mother;
I have good reasons for 't. So rest thee merry
Till I return.

*Countess.* Methinks, since yesternight,
Thou 'st strangely changed thy note all o' the sudden.
Thou 'st had a dream perchance. When thou, like me,
Hast dreamed and dreamed, and found them lying prophets
Whene'er they boded good, thou 'lt no more heed them
Than doth a hungry man the unsolid fragrance
Breathes from a bed of flowers. Thy hope is fancy;
Thy wish begat them both.

*Gaston.* Thou seest, dear mother,
I am not sad; is that no argument—
On parting with thee?

*Countess.* Of thy faith it is ;
But nothing more. Dear Gaston, of thy willingness
To make it fact, I doubt not. In that certainty,
'll school my heart to hope. And now, beseech thee,
Be kind to this dear boy—

*Gaston.* My pretty page !
When he appears at Court, he 'll set the damsels
A-pulling caps for him.

*Countess.* I pray thee, love him
For my sake, Gaston, and watch over him—
He hath none other guardian. He 's an orphan ;
His parents were my friends.

*Gaston.* And he 'll be mine.
't is an easy task is laid on me
To love so sweet a charge. Is it not so,
My pretty Isabert ?

*Isab.* If so thou find not
The heart belie the face.

*Gaston.* I 'll not believe it.
The devil ne'er housed him in so fair a temple.
't is not possible ; or, if it should,
'll but remember that this lady loved thee,
And love thee ne'ertheless. Nay, silly boy !
What weep'st thou for ? Is it to leave thy friend ?
Thou 'lt find in me a friend as true, and one
s more thy playfellow.

*Countess.* Dear Isabert !
Dry up thy tears. Thou 'lt find him all he says,
And all I vouched for him. Thy train is ready.
I have some messages to charge thee with

To Father Nicholas, and what other friends
Remember me at Orthes. Come to my closet.
The meanwhile, wait us here, dear Isabert—
We will be back anon.

[*Exeunt* COUNTESS *and* GASTON.

*Isabel* (*sola*). Why will they flow, these tears—these foolish tears!
They had well-nigh betrayed me. Why I weep
I cannot tell. They were but words of course;
Yet, when he spake them, oh! methinks, that moment
I could have followed him throughout the world,
Beggared and barefoot through Siberian snows
And Afric sands, to minister to him,
Forsook for him home, kindred, country—all,
And lived for him, or died! But, ha! Who 's that?
What uncouth man is here? He beckons me.
How wild he looks! He 's mad—he's coming hither.
I 'll call aloud for help.

(*Enter* GIOVANNI *hastily and agitated.*)

*Giov.* My Lord Count Gaston!
Alas! it is not he—'tis but his page.
Beseech thee, gentle boy, a word with thee;
For Heaven's sake, do not go!

*Charles* (*without*). Ho! Gaston, ho!

*Giov.* It is the fiend himself!

(*Grasping* ISABERT'S *arm suddenly*).

The purse!—the purse!—
Steal it—destroy it—burn it! Charge Count Gaston
As he doth hope for heaven—

(*Enter* CHARLES, *dressed as for riding.*)

*Charles.* What, Giovanni !
Thou here ! Hast seen my nephew ?
*Giov.* (*confused*). Seen, my lord !
Who—what—the purse ?
*Charles.* The purse ! Who spake of purses ?
Art thou run mad ? So, he is here and ready.
Come on, my pretty page.
[*Exeunt* CHARLES *and* ISABERT.
*Giov.* Mad ! didst thou say ?
O that I were !
Mad as the raving maniac in his cell
Doth howl against the moon ! and thou, fiend-king,
No more—no worse—than mad ! That silly page,
I fear, conceived me not. If so, we've sent
Another tell-tale shall at heaven's assize
Appeal high justice with prevailing prayer
To raze our names out from the roll of mercy !
O cursed King ! O fated Giovanni ! [*Exit.*

END OF ACT II.

# ACT III.

## Scene First.

ORTHES—AN APARTMENT IN THE CASTLE OF MONÇADA.

(GASTON *and* ISABEL (*as* ISABERT). *The former in a hunting dress, reclining on a couch as fatigued, the latter holding his hand playfully.*)

*Isab.* I must not then '*My Lord*' thee.
*Gaston.* No, dear Isabert,
Nothing but Gaston.
*Isab.* 'Tis the kindlier phrase;
It comes more native to my heart and tongue,
And sounds the sweeter to me. But is 't warranted
I' the Court code, that I, a simple page,
Bespeak thee as thine equal? My Lord Count,
Thy father, hath been held the none-beyond
In courtly forms and gentle usages—
Will 't not displeasure him?
*Gaston.* Dear Isabert,
Thou art my bosom's friend, and love and friendship
Do find or make them equals. I 've been drugged
To very loathing with these formalties

In that cursed Armagnac.

*Isab.* Now, fy thee, Gaston !
It is not well to speak so of my country.
I am an Armagnese.

*Gaston.* Ha ! ha ! beshrew me
For a brief memory ! and so thou art,
And of its gentlest blood, my mother vouched so :
Yield me thy pardon, my sweet Isabert,
And thy lips seal to it.—(*Kisses her.*)

*Isab.* Fy, fy ! 'tis using me
As tho' I were a woman. But I pardon thee
For slandering Armagnac, on one condition.

*Gaston.* Name it.

*Isab.* But wilt thou answer honestly
The question I propound thee ?

*Gaston.* As thou hadst me
On the confessional. So to thy catechism.

*Isab.* Thou speak'st in bitterness of Armagnac ;
Something displeased thee there. Was 't Isabel ?

*Gaston.* Fy, no !

*Isab.* Strange tales were told at Court of thee,
And of thy wooing. But thou wilt be angry
If I report them thee.

*Gaston.* Nay, nay, I will not.

*Isab.* Didst ever see thy bride ?

*Gaston.* Yes.

*Isab.* Speak with her ?

*Gaston.* Ay, publicly.

*Isab.* But not in private ?

*Gaston.* No.

*Isab.* But thou didst give her the betrothing kiss.

(GASTON *indicates dissent.*)

The parting kiss at least—

*Gaston.* No, Isabert;

Neither.

*Isab.* Fy, fy! upon the insolent minx!

'Twas she then did refuse it; for of course

Thou didst petition hard—

*Gaston.* She 's not to blame;

I never asked of her—

*Isab.* To kiss her finger?—

Her glove?—her fan?—her slipper?—not even that?

Some tender glances then—some messages?

*Gaston.* Ay, daily messages did pass betwixt us,

And change of courtesies.

*Isab.* Oh! the sweet innocents!

Canst thou repeat me of them?

*Gaston.* Nay, I cannot—

Nor ought not, if I could.

*Isab.* I heard of them;

The style, methought, wherein thou didst indite them

Was somewhat of the quaintest. But perhaps

It is the dialect is used at Orthes

In love affairs. It is most learned and lofty;

I doubt me much if Isabel could construe it

Without the glossary.

*Gaston.* Thou speak'st in riddles.

*Isab.* Here is a specimen was much admired—

I stole me it. The rest were of a piece.

(*Handing a letter to* GASTON.)

*Gaston.* What fustian 's here ? (*Reads*)—' To my celestial bride—

That Phœnix fair—that bird of Paradise—
The princely, peerless, priceless Isabel.'

*Both.* Ha ! ha ! ha !

*Gaston.* Why ! this is better still :
It solves a mystery hath long perplexed
Leeches and learned men—the cause of hydrophobia—
(*Reads.*) ' An aged crone, that was by day a woman,
A hare at twilight, and a cat at midnight,
A most authentic witch—was bullet-proof—
Who sailed the sea in sieve or cockle-shell,
And rode o' nights upon a switch-tailed broom—
Gave devil's suck—this crone did rede me once,
That, if I chanced to kiss a puppy-dog
When fasting, and that self-same day did taste me
A virgin's lip, it would straightway engender
The hydrophobia. Calliope—
She 's of the spaniel blood, my favourite bitch—
Her mother's name was Pompey—no, he was
Her father—her mother's name was Jezebel—
Not Isabel, I pray thee keep in mind,
But Jezebel.—Now, this Calliope
Each morn, soon as my chamber's door is opened,
Leaps on my bed, and wakes me with her kisses.
So thereupon there must no kissing pass
'Twixt me and thee—we will go dog-mad else.'

*Both.* Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !

*Gaston.* She were the boldest of her sex, methinks,
Who, thus admonished, ventured on a kiss !

*Isab.* And his ungallantry stands fair excused
I' the not tendering one.
*Gaston.* It doth, so long
As a dog's lip is sweeter than a woman's.—
But, heaven and earth! to this most lunatic nonsense
Here is my name subscribed, '*Gaston of Foix*;'
And in my very hand the signature,
Though not what goes before.
*Isab.* Didst thou indite it?
*Gaston.* Thou canst not gravely ask it, Isabert.
It was not so alleged?
*Isab.* 'Twas sent to Isabel,
And many such as they did come from thee.
*Gaston.* To Isabel! She could not sure be fooled
With such poor forgeries! And yet, methought,
Her answers still were wild, and from the matter
Did wander strangely wide.
*Isab.* Confess thee, Gaston,
Thy strange demeanour to thy bride but showed
True counterpart to this, and lent confirmance
To what else were incredible. 'Tis true
Thou 'rt right courageous in kissing me,
A boy. But were I Isabel—they say
I 'm like her too, and we are of an age—
Thy kissing courage would, I doubt me, cool;
Thou 'dst plead thy favourite bitch, Calliope,
Had had the morning hansel o' thy lips,
And sadly whine—'Ware hydrophobia!

*Gaston.* No, no : I would atone me for the past
And smother her with kisses—thus, thus, thus.
(*Kissing her.*)
And if her kisses be but sweet as thine,
She will indeed be a celestial bride.

*Isab.* Mercy upon us ! What a storm of kisses !—
A thunder-storm—it has had lightning in 't—
It's set my face on fire !

(GASTON *suddenly begins searching for something, first in his dress, and then anxiously through the apartment.*)

What is the matter, Gaston? What hast lost ?
What art thou searching for ?

*Gaston.* Oh ! nothing.

*Isab.* Then 'twill be hard to find.

*Gaston.* I had it yesternight.

*Isab.* What hadst thou yesternight?—thy wits? Methinks
To-day thou hast them not. Let me assist thee :
What hast thou lost ?

*Gaston.* The purse—saw'st thou the purse ?
A leathern purse ?

*Isab.* Po ! po ! is it but that ?
What held this purse ?

*Gaston.* Oh ! nothing.

*Isab.* All this fuss
For losing nothing !

*Gaston.* Nay, I would not lose 't
For half mine heritage.

*Isab.* It hath been held
Old Esau was a fool who sold his birthright

For one poor mess of pottage ; but young Gaston
Would sell the half of Foix and Bierne
All for a leathern purse, and full of——nothing !

*Gaston.* Nay, nay—'tis past a jest—I will go mad
If it be lost.

*Isab.* What wilt thou give me, then,
If I should find it ?

*Gaston.* Anything—everything—
I 'll love thee more than ever, dearest Isabert.

*Isab.* Enough ! enough ! Thou canst not bribe me higher.
Thou hast, since break of day, been at the boar-hunt—
Thou 'rt in thy hunter's dress. 'Tis in the vest
Thou hadst on yesternight.

*Gaston.* Fy ! what a dolt
Not to remember it !

*Isab.* I 'll fetch it for thee—
Thou 'rt tired.

*Gaston.* Nay, nay—I 'll go for it myself ;
Nay, do not stir, I pray thee—I command thee :
Abide thee here ! (GASTON *goes out.*)

*Isab.* He spake that angrily !
What can be in that purse ? 'Tis question long
Hath tempted sore my woman's curiosity :
He ever carries it about his person—
Conceals it anxiously—would not confess
Even to his mother what it holds.—And ha !
Now, I remember me, that uncouth man
That rushed so wildly in and frightened me,
That day we left Navarre, did charge me something
Touching a purse, to steal it, or destroy it,

Or some such thing. There is some mystery in 't :—
I marvel me what can be in that purse !

(*Enter* SIR YVAIN, *who has overheard the last remark,—slaps* ISABERT *on the shoulder.*)

*Sir Yvain.* I' faith, and so do I, my pretty page !
It was my very thought. I fain would know 't ;
For once before I questioned him thereof,
But he evaded answer ; and even now,
As I did enter me his chamber suddenly,
He held it in his hand, but hastily
Replaced it in his bosom ; and when I
Rallied him upon his secret worship
Of his purse-idol, he, methought, did blush
Unpleased embarrassment. Holds it some gem
Or stone of price, thinkst thou ?

*Isab.* No—'tis not that ;
For once by chance I pressed it, and methought,
It felt a powder tender to the touch,
Yielding, and fine.

*Sir Yv.* He brought it from Navarre.
Was 't of his mother's gifting ?

*Isab.* Of his uncle's.

*Sir Yv.* His uncle's ! Art thou sure ?

*Isab.* That much I know.
I saw him give it, and most hurriedly,
Just as his mother entered.

*Sir Yv.* (*aside.*) Charles's gift,
And given privily ! There's something there !
He deals in powders too.

(*To Isabert.*) Thou art his favourite:
Coax him, and he will tell thee.

*Isab.* Whensoe'er
I speak of it, he waxeth angry with me—
He was so even now.

*Sir Yv.* Thou sleep'st with him.

*Isab.* I sleep with him!

*Sir Yv.* Thou art his bedfellow,
Art not?

*Isab.* His bedfellow! And I not married to him!

*Sir Yv.* Ha! ha! And so thou wouldst not sleep with him,
Or me, or any man, save thou wert married to us!

*Isab.* Indeed, Sir Yvain, I would not.

*Sir Yv.* Ha! ha!
Thou foolish urchin! Thou art not a girl
To be thus squeamish nice lest thy boy bedfellow
Should in his sleep dismantle and dismaid thee!
I guess me what it is: I know my brother
Is full of freits and fancies: 'tis some charm
To ease the headache, or assure fair weather,
Scare off the goblins, or forfend a freckle,
Or speed his birth of beard.

*Isab.* Is he so superstitious?

*Sir Yv.* Not an old crone who fancies she is free
O' the black sisterhood of witches more so.

*Isab.* Sir knight, thou dost not read thy brother kindly,
Nor, as I think me, truly.

*Sir Yv.* Wilt thou venture

To put it on the proof? I'll wager thee
'Tis some such trash—no more.

*Isab.* How may we prove it?

*Sir Yv.* I know a way. There be who in their sleep,
If spoken to, will answer without waking,
And to the matter true,—thereby revealing
What politic Reason, master of the will,
Had lip-locked, if awake. 'Tis so with Gaston.
In boyhood we were bedfellows, and I
Have proved it oft and oft, breeding his wonder
How I would still foreguess his purposes,
Even his most bosomed ones. He deemed I held
Unlawful dealing with the spirit Orthon
Served Raymond of Corasse. I pray thee, warn me
Soon as he falls on sleep, on his first sleep.

*Isab.* We'll not have long to wait. He is much tired
With his day's toil in hunting of the boar.

*Sir Yv.* Fail not to give me warning. I will put him,
Albeit no priest, on the confessional,
And pump me secrets Father Nicholas
Hath not a line is deep enough to reach.

[*Exit* Sir Yvain.

*Isab.* Have I done well in this? I know my plot-fellow
For one is bad and base, heartless and false—
A dark designing villain. 'Tis past doubt
He forged those documents and foolish messages
Sent me in Gaston's name. He knew right well
I bore a spirit would not brook to wed
A husband I despised; and he did deem
The only sister of Count Armagnac,

The unwifed Bernard, was for bastard brother
A prize worth winning, even at honour's price!
And yet, methinks, he hath no motive here
To misreport the truth. I fain would know
If Gaston be so very superstitious,
And what is held in this mysterious purse.
This once, Yvain! I'll be thy plot-fellow. [*Exit.*

---

## Scene Second.

ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE SAME.

(THE COUNT OF FOIX *and* YVAIN.)

*Count.* I've charged thee silence on that theme already --
Forbear it, Yvain.

*Sir Yv.* Good my lord, remember
He's but a boy.

*Count.* Did he not laugh to scorn
Thy brotherly reproofs, yet thou dost plead for him!

*Sir Yv.* Albeit our brother's blood be not like perfect,
He is my brother.

*Count.* Would to heaven 'twere thou
Didst vein the perfect, he th' imperfect blood!
For thou art dutiful and he rebellious.

*Sir Yv.* He is thine heir.

*Count.* And so should set example
Of meet obedience to the power he heirs,
Not wreck its reverence in the general eye
By scorning it. Didst thou not warn him so?

*Sir Yv.* 'Tis true, my lord, I did remember him,

That whoso born in Foix or Bierne
Thy will made known, did counter 't stubbornly,
Without reprief or remedy, the law
Adjudged him to the death.

*Count.* How answered he?

*Sir Yv.* I pray thee, good my lord, forbear to question.
He's but a boy. His heart, I gage my life on't, 's
More loyal than his speech.

*Count.* What said the traitor?

*Sir Yv.* My lord, beseech thee let a brother's tongue
Forbear a brother's fault.

*Count.* Hath he no shame?
Shows he no sign of sorrow or remorse?
Fears he not my displeasure? Thou art silent;
I charge thee on thy duty, answer me,
And to the question true.

*Sir Yv.* Would I could answer thee
Truly, my lord, as I would wishedly.

*Count.* I understand thee. He 's been duly tutored
At Pampeluna, where he found, I doubt not,
Sage counsellors, kind teachers of rebellion.
In tickle points of duty and of honour,
His uncle of Navarre 's an expert casuist
And learned practitioner. Speaks he of him?

*Sir Yv.* As one he greatly honours, who hath loaded him
With largess and with love.

*Count.* No doubt, no doubt—
Not with the fifty thousand crowns, however,
He owes his father; for th' Antipodes
Must have changed places in a summerset

Ere Charles be tumbled into honesty.
Speaks he nought of his mother?

*Sir Yv.* Constantly;—
With joy and pride that she will shortly come
In triumph hither. Good my lord, beseech thee,
Ere she do come, receive my brother Gaston
To thy forgiveness.

*Count.* And who told thee
That she doth come at all?

*Sir Yv.* The general voice.

*Count.* The general voice! Who gave the fools their warrant?

*Sir Yv.* From Gaston's speech it is concluded surely
He hath his uncle's warrant, or his mother's—

*Count.* His uncle's warrant, or his mother's, sayest thou!
Rebellious, insolent, unnatural boy!
I'll teach him there's a warrant is required
Above them both!—a warrant he and they
Must bow them to, or counter't at their peril! [*Exit.*

*Sir Yv.* (*solus.*) The flame is up! It must be fed and fanned
Till it hath reached the roof-tree of the house,
And then long life to bastards! Ay, that powder!
Charles of Navarre's a shrewd apothecary:
His pills and powders, I will warrant them,
Are not of barley-meal! Whate'er its virtue,
Be't life or death, I'll find me in't, or make me
Shall fuel-feed the bonfire of my fortune!
And in good hour here comes my monitor.
He beckons me—is he asleep already? [*Exit.*

## Scene Third.

THE SAME—A BED-CHAMBER—GASTON IN BED ASLEEP.

(*Enter cautiously* SIR YVAIN *and* ISABERT.)

*Sir Yv.* (*approaching the bed*). So, so—he's fast; and in that stage of slumber
Doth aid our purpose best. Speak thou to him—
Thy voice o' late is most familiar to him;
'll be thy prompter.

(SIR YVAIN *whispers the questions to* ISABERT, *who proposes them.*)

*Isab.* Now thou 'st found the purse,
Gaston, beware thou lose it not again.
*Gaston.* (*speaking in sleep.*)
Oh! fear me not. I 've placed it in my casket
For more security, beside the jewels
Mine uncle gave me.
*Isab.* Which esteemest thou most,
The jewels or the purse?
*Gaston.* Be sure the purse.
*Isab.* Because of its contents—for that rare powder—
*Gaston.* And its most rare effects.
*Isab.* This precious powder,
Whom wilt thou prove it on?
*Gaston.* Oh! on my father.
*Isab.* And when, I pray thee?
*Gaston.* When I bear his cup.

*Isab.* Thou 'lt mix it with his drink.

*Gaston.* Ay, cunningly,
And none shall see me do 't.

*Isab.* Why cunningly?

*Gaston.* It has no virtue else, mine uncle warned me.

*Isab.* (*to Sir Yvain.*) His father's cup, and drugged thus secretly!
I like it not.

*Sir Yvain.* Poh! poh! proceed; assure thee
'Tis nothing but some charm or nurse's nostrum
Mixed at the full of moon.

*Isab.* When dost thou use it—
I' th' parting draught?

*Gaston.* No. In his second cup.

*Isab.* Why in his second?

*Gaston.* 'Tis in that he healths
My banished mother.

*Isab.* (*to Sir Yvain.*) Healths his banished mother!
His father's cup, and drugged thus privily
Whenas he drinks to her! Oh! let us wake him,
Charge him with his confession, and, if he
Do meditate a deed so black and damned—

*Sir Yv.* Poh! silly boy, what art thou dreaming of?
'Tis nothing of the kind.

*Isab.* This peerless powder,
What virtue and what action hath it, Gaston?
How will it work on him?

*Gaston.* Oh! from that moment
He 'll love my mother with so true a love,
He may not live without her.

*Sir Yv.* Now, Sir Page!
Was I true prophet—read me *yea* or *nay?*
'Tis out—the secret of this wondrous purse!
It holds a love-powder wherewith a dame
Would quack her husband's pulse to honesty—
And physic him to love!
*Isab.* Ha! ha! ha! ha!
Oh, dear, dear! A love-powder!—a love-powder—
Nought but a love-powder!
*Sir Yv.* Away—away!
Thy foolish mirth hath waked him.

[*Exeunt hastily* Sir Yvain *and* Isabert.

*Gaston (awaking).* Isabert!
There 's no one here—methought he talked with me!
'Twas but a dream—I 'm glad it was no more.
'Tis not a theme were safely spoken on
Save to one's-self in sleep—I 'm dozing still. (*Falls asleep.*)

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## Scene Fourth.

ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE SAME.

(*Enter* Sir Yvain *and* Isabert.)

*Isab.* Ha! ha! ha! ha!—Physick'd and drugg'd to love!
Forsooth, a pretty plot! and for a king
To have a finger in 't—Heigho! heigho!
When Gaston wakes I 'll beg a pinch of powder—
And then I know whose cup I 'll drug with it!
*Sir Yv.* Indeed, Sir Ganymede!

In love already !—ere thy chin hath brairded
The promise of a beard ! Precocious monkey !
Get thee to bed to dream of thy donzella,
And fancy thee a man. I warrant me,
'Tis more than will thy sweetheart. For thy life,
Let no one know what we have learned to-night,
Else Gaston will be laughed at, and the Count
Angered to mad with him. To bed—to bed !

*Isab.* A love-powder ! ha ! ha !—Cupid transformed
Into a brewer and apothecary !
Shoots not his living arrows from the eye,
Nor aims them at the heart, but shovels him
Pellet and potion down his victim's throat,
To stir a yearning in a yeasty stomach !
Ha ! ha ! ha !—good-night. [*Exit* ISABERT.

*Sir Yv.* (*solus.*) A love-powder ! pshaw ! pshaw ! He deals in powders,
But they are not of love ! He hates my father—
He owes him money—one kind pinch of powder
Will settle both accounts. It must not be.
My father poisoned, I take nought thereby ;
Gaston inherits. Yet this royal powder
Shall serve me royally. The mixer 's foiled,
My purpose takes instead. My father's mood
With this suspect of parricide and treason
Fired to the frenzy pitch, with apt appliance,
May chance enact a second tragedy
Shall make the first, poor Peter's of Ernaut,
To pale and pass it forth men's memory. [*Exit.*

# ACT IV.

## Scene First.

ORTHES—AN APARTMENT IN THE CASTLE OF MONÇADA.

(*The* COUNT OF FOIX *and* SIR YVAIN.)

*Count.* Nay, spare thy thanks—I do not merit them—
'Twas wrung from me. The fickle crowd, as ever,
Desert the setting Phœbus for the rising.
Where'er I went, the bawling multitudes
Waylaid me with petitions—mine own household—
The lords of Foix—thou thyself, son Yvain—
There was no standing it. For very weariness
I yielded your request.

*Sir Yvain.* What moved thereto,
My lord, we question not, but bless the doing.
I will be voucher with my life for him,
My brother Gaston will repay thy grace
With usury of love.

*Count.* Hum! time will show—
Thou 'rt a fair-weather prophet. But I doubt me
He hath too much o' th' leaven of Navarre
To make thine almanac trust-worth.

*Sir Yv.* Who to-night
Carries thy cup, my lord?
*Count.* Thy brother Gaston.
*Sir Yv.* Indeed! He did not ask it?
*Count.* Earnestly.
*Sir Yv.* Indeed!
*Count.* Why dost thou iterate *indeed*,
Accenting it with wonder?
*Sir Yv.* Nay, my lord,
I did not mean—and yet 'tis strange—
*Count.* What 's strange?
*Sir Yv.* That he should beg to bear thy cup to-night.
*Count.* What's strange in that? It was his ancient office—
His privilege as mine heir. He asks it back,
And why should I refuse?
*Sir Yv.* But this one night,
Beseech thee, good my lord, deny it him.
*Count.* And why for this one night? Then my forgiveness
Had lacked its grace and showed with reservation.
*Sir Yv.* Ay, true and so it would; and yet, my lord,
Humbly I crave it on my bended knee
But this one night make me thy cup-bearer.
*Count.* Why so? Thou'rt silent. There 's a mystery then,—
Thou lovest thy brother?
*Sir Yv.* Therefore do I ask it.
*Count.* Ask for the office symbols him mine heir,
And ask it all for love! 'Tis strange.
*Sir Yv.* Yet true:
His rights I grudge not, and I love himself;
Yet for this night would I usurp his birthright.

*Count.* Moving his father to conspire with thee,
And yet no cause assigned!
*Sir Yv.* There is a cause.
*Count.* What is it, then? Nay, speak.
*Sir Yv.* Necessity—
*Count.* That 's an exactor brooks no saying *nay* to.
But why necessity?
*Sir Yv.* Alas! my lord,
I 've said too much.
*Count.* Too little or too much,
Even as the after-say shall warrant thee;
For thou must tell me all.
*Sir Yv.* A double love
Bequeaths divided duties. When these clash—
Like counter-currents i' the Equinox
Meet at the top of flood—the bark of reason,
Unhelmed of will, is tossed and counter-tossed
Nor knows which hand to steer.
*Count.* Pshaw! your blank verse
Is good when it is good. So is plain prose:
But your blank prose is an hermaphrodite,
Unfit for either use. Spare me thy similes—
I cannot render oracles, so, pray thee,
A truce to metaphor, and a plain story
Deliver me in prose.
*Sir Yv.* Both ways I shipwreck;
I love my brother, and I owe thee duty.
*Count.* More, sir! thou owest me life; I gave it thee
And I can take it from thee. As thy father,
Thy sovereign, I command thee, on that life,

To answer me and to the question home—
Why wouldst thou be my cup-bearer to-night,
And why should Gaston not?

*Sir Yv.* Thus high appealed,
My lord, I 'll tell thee all. But oh! beseech thee,
Whatever in the tale I tell shows doubtful,
Construe 't the kindlier way, and promise me,
When 'tis revealed, whate'er the mystery,
My brother Gaston's life.

*Count.* Ha! yolks thine egg
Matter like that? Upon thy duty, sir,
On with thy damned tale.

*Sir Yv.* E'er since that journey
Into Navarre, I have remarked my brother
Bears on his person a small leathern purse
Of sorry workmanship he seemed most anxious
To hide from all. I questioned him of it—
He blushed embarrassment, and answered not;
And when I ventured me a second time
To rally him, with troubled look and gesture
He left me angrily. I marvelled me
What could be in this purse. Thou know'st when boy,
The trick he had of answering in his sleep.
And how thereby and to his oft surprise
I found his secrets out. In 's guardless sleep,
Last night, I questioned him touching this purse,
And learned—(*Pauses.*)

*Count.* What didst thou learn?

*Sir Yv.* That which, my lord,

I dare not think upon. It slew my sleep,
And would slay thine. I pray thee, ask no more.
*Count.* Arrest upon the wing the thought-fast thunderbolt,
Or bid the cataract hath taën the leap,
Stand in its mid of fall—then bid me pause
Ere I have searched this damned secret out.
Thou learn'dst this purse—
*Sir Yv.* Holdeth a mortal poison.
*Count.* So, so!
*Sir Yv.* To avenge the wrongs of Agnes of Navarre.—
*Count.* On his own father, Gaston of Monçada!
A worthy scholar of a worthy school!
Said I not truly? Hath he not in him
The leaven of Navarre?—Poisoner and parricide!
No marvel if thine uncle loved thee well,
Who dost excel him in his proper acts—
Poison and perfidy!
But here's shall foil ye both!—(*Unsheathing his poniard.*)
Here 's that shall rip me
The wasp would poison and his poison-bag!
Where is this Navarrene?
*Sir Yv.* My lord, consider
A blameless mind may dream a wicked dream—
Foul fancies sleep-molest the chastest bosoms—
And devils ride rough-shod o'er the sleeping brain,
Had fled rebuked before the waking reason.
His answers may be but the random ravings
Of a wild dream—not waking purposes.
*Count.* Ay, ay! it must be so! It cannot be,
To heaven's inhibitive, and holiest instincts

He could not counter him so monstrously
To poison his own father! And yet, Yvain,
Didst thou not tell me in his talking sleep
He answers ever to the question truly?

*Sir Yv.* I've found it ever so; and therefore 'twas
I urged me that request—to bear thy cup
But for this single night.

*Count.* Oh! there 's no doubting it;
He is a parricide! Go send him to me.

*Sir Yv.* Give him full trial, good my lord, beseech thee—
Ye 're newly reconciled. He was the wronger,
And thou the wronged. Uncertified suspicion,
Pushed into act, will to the general seem
He is the wronged, and thou the wrong-doer.
And here 's that prying prating chronicler,
The Canon Froissart, with his tablets, ready
To register whate'er hath in 't of gossip,
To spice the palate of posterity.
Refrain thy second cup. If he speak true,
'Tis there thy danger is. I will observe him;
And if he purpose false.—

*Count.* He dies! And then
Let Fame and Froissart do their worst, I stand
Absolved of earth and heaven! [*Exit.*

*Sir Yv.* (*solus.*) Sir Count, Amen!
And he will purpose false, or seem to purpose—
I will assure him that. Ha! here he comes,
As though my very wish had whistled him.
(*Enter* GASTON.) So thou 're instated in thy rights again,
Dear Gaston—give thee joy!

*Gaston.* And give thee thanks,
Dear Yvain; for they tell me thou hast been
My chiefest advocate.

*Sir Yv.* Our happiness
Had lacked in nothing were thy mother here;
And there 's a little bird hath whispered me
She will ere long.

*Gaston.* Hath any told thee so?

*Sir Yv.* To-night, thou knowest, the banquet will be high
In yearly honour of St. Nicholas,
The chiefest lords of Foix will be present—
The Viscounts Roquebertin and Brunequel,
The Lords Corasse, Barege, De Valentin,
The Bourg of Spain, th' Bastot of Mauleon,
And many more. I 've moved them in the matter—
They 'll second us. Soon as my lord doth health
Thy lady mother, with his second cup,
Petition her return. We 'll join with thee—
He will not say us *nay*.

*Gaston.* Ha! think'st thou so?
In truth, I purposed some such thing myself,
And have some reasons do assure me there
Thou prophesiest aright.

*Sir Yv.* My lord, the Count
Left me but now. He 's in a gracious humour;
And so thou press him earnestly, assure thee
Thou shalt not need again. Be sure thou do it
When thou hast filled his second cup!

*Gaston.* Ay, ay;
'Twas then I purposed me.

*Sir Yv.* We meet at banquet.
This feast of Nicholas will, I guess me, prove
The most remembered e'er was held in Orthes!

[*Exeunt.*

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## Scene Second.

### THE BANQUETING HALL.

(*A banquet laid out. The hall is illumined with torches borne by attendants. At the chief table are seated the Count and the chief lords of Foix and Bierne. In the background, other tables, with guests, are seen extending the whole length of the hall.* GASTON, *bearing the cup, stands on his father's right hand;* ISABERT *behind him:* SIR YVAIN *on the left. Music played for some time by minstrels placed near the Count's table.*)

*Count.* Thanks, minstrels! thanks! Largess and loving thanks! (*Gives them money.*)
Bear to my lord your master, with my thanks,
My hearty commendations. [*Exeunt minstrels.*
'Twas brave music,
Was 't not, my lords, they played? Is it not strange
That air unsyllabled should stir us thus?
As we were fashioned like that instrument
Whose strings but fingered by the passing breeze
Return true answer to its varying moods!
How didst thou relish them, good Master Froissart?

*Frois.* Surpassing well. My lord Duke of Touraine

Hath rare delight in minstrelsy, and is
A master in the gentle craft himself :
These men are of his household, are they not,
My lord ?

*Count.* They are. He sent them for my pleasure.
They 've tarried here a month.

*Frois.* 'Twas well, Saint Mary !
My minstrel's rhyme forewent their minstrel music,
Else had it grated on the hearer's ear,
As doth the skirring of the night-hawk heard
After the nightingale.

*Count.* Nay, Master Froissart,
Thou play'st the maiden now, but coys to challenge
A hotter courtship. Praise is poet's nectar,
And thou wouldst have another cup of it !
But hold thee well content. We 'll not forget
The worthy gestes thou 'st been rehearsing us,
Nor yet the worthy rhymes recorded them.
He was, i' faith ! a noble knight, and hardy,
That king of Scots thou told'st us of—the Bruce.
So was his friend Sir James of Douglas too—
Thou 'st heard how he came by his death, hast not ?

*Frois.* No, my good lord. But an thou please to tell me,
It shall be matter for my history.

*Count.* Then thus it was :—In quittance of a vow,
The Bruce did on his deathbed charge the Douglas
To 'balm his heart, bear it to Palestine,
And lodge it in the holy sepulchre.
Upon his way, he turned aside to Spain,
To help the good Alphonso of Castile

Against the Saracen. 'Twas with him there
I won my maiden spurs. He led our vantguard ;
And 'twas his usage still, shouting his war-cry,
T' unclasp the casket held his master's heart,
Was slung around his neck, and fling it forward
A long stone's-cast among the Infidels,
Then to the rescue rush—addressing it—
'There ! march thou foremost, heart that never feared
I' th' glorious field, as 'twas thy wont to do !
And, by God's blessing, I will follow thee,
As I've done heretofore !' When he was slain,
Good King Alphonso wept him like a child,
Nor ne'er again would see that laggard Don
Left the brave Scot to perish without rescue.

*Frois.* Beshrew the Spaniard ! did he leave the heart
Of Robert Bruce, then, with the Infidel ?

*Count.* No, no. We rescued that ; and with the body
Of noble Douglas sent it home to Scotland.
He was a good knight, too, of marv'llous strength
That other Scot thou told'st us of—the Wallace.
Dost think he could have done the feat that knight
Doth sit beside thee there, Sir Ernalton,
The Bourg of Spain, and in this very Castle,
Did once upon a time ?

*Frois.* I cannot tell :
But if he did what Wallace could not do
By strength of arm, i' faith ! he might have ventured him
Fall with Sir Ajax or Sir Hercules,
Or old Sir Branor, or the devil himself.
What was it, good my lord ?

*Count.* Three winters past,
We held our Christmas cheer. The day was cold—
A most exceeding frost. When we had feasted,
We did withdraw us to the gallery,
Which is, thou knowest, a four-and-twenty steps
To climb thereto. The fire was passing small,
Whereat I was displeased. It chanced Sir Ernalton
Was standing by a window, and espied
A train of asses entering the court-yard
Were laden heavily with blocks for firewood.
He ran downstairs, and seizing of the largest,
Billets and all, he threw him o'er his shoulders,
Mounted the stairs, and, when he reached the chamber,
The frightened donkey and his load he dashed
Heels upwards on the hearth!

*All.* Ha! ha! ha!

*Frois.* Now, by St. Mary! 'twas a mighty feat,
And a right merry!—one in hall to brag of.
Trust me, Sir Ernalton, it shall be chronicled.

*Count.* Son Gaston, fetch my cup, and fill it high!
Lords, knights, and squires, we health a noble lady,
And that, ye know, demands a flowing cup.

*Sir Yv.* (*aside to* GASTON.) Now, Gaston—now!

*Gaston* (*kneeling*). A boon, my lord! a boon—
I crave it on my knees.

*Count.* What wouldst thou, Gaston?

*Gaston.* My mother home to Orthes.

*Count.* Who forbids her?

*Gaston.* Then, pray thee, good my lord, to send for her;
She will not come without—

*Viscount Roquebertin.* Ay, good my lord—
The lords of Foix and Bierne beseech thee—
Thou wilt consent to it.

*Count.* My lords! my rule
Hath ever been and shall be constant this—
Never to grant me boon, nor to refuse,
Over the festal cup. Of this to-morrow—
Drink to her health the while.

(GASTON *fills the Count's cup. Then, turning his back, drops into it some of the powder from the leathern purse.*)

*Sir Yv.* Ha! brother Gaston!
What 's that thou 'rt mixing in the cup?

*Count* (*snatching the cup and looking into it*). Ay, sirrah!
What hast thou mingled here? faugh! faugh! it smells
Most sickeningly! What stuff hast thou put here?

*Gaston* (*confused*). Nothing, my lord—

*Count.* Nothing! There 's something. Ay,
And something damnable, else does the sense
Mistell its quality.

*Isabert.* There 's nought, my lord,
But that shall work thee good. Ask Sir Yvain.
Sir Yvain, is 't not so?

*Count.* Peace, malapert!
Hath he no tongue himself?

*Sir Yv.* I 'm no apothecary;
I saw my brother mix it from the purse
Is in his bosom there—

*Count* (*pulling out the purse by the strings which are hanging from Gaston's bosom*).
Ay, here 's that coffers

The love-gift of Navarre! forestalls my funeral—
And makes him Count of Foix and Bierne!
(*Drawing his poniard.*)
Traitor, confess!—Was 't not thine uncle gave it?
Answer'st thou not?
*Isab.* My lord, it was his uncle,
But not for harm to thee.
*Count.* Indeed, Sir Oracle!
Wilt swear to that? Wouldst thou essay my cup?
*Isab.* And willingly, albeit I need it not.
*Sir Yv.* (*aside.*) This boy knows just enough to clear his master—
Yet not to save himself. But let him drink—
'Twill hush a witness might prove troublesome,
And thunder-speed the end.
(*To the* COUNT.) My lord, that Gaston
Did purpose false I'll not believe me it,
And here's a test will try. He loves this boy—
Gaston! dost not? Thou wouldst not have him harmed?
*Gaston.* No—not for worlds.
*Sir Yv.* Yet without stint wouldst let him
Drink of this questioned cup?
*Gaston.* Ay, ay, Yvain,
Although it suits him not.
*Isab.* Nay, Gaston, nay—
It suits me passing well. Albeit it doth
But deepen that is deep enough already—
Give me't, my lord.
*Count.* Then over bold, remember
'Twas of thine asking, shouldst thou rue the venture.

*Isab.* Were't drugged with henbane or with hellebore,
Brewed for my death-drink, so it saved his life,
I'd quaff it cheerfully. But as it is—
Health to my lord of Foix and Bierne!
And length of days to brook his heritage
And reach a gracious end! And may he love
His noble lady Agnes of Navarre,
And she her lord, as tender and as true
As I—as Isabel of Armagnac
Doth love whose name she sweets this cup the by,
Gaston, her trothed lord! (*Drinks it off.*)

*Count.* What fooling 's here?

*Isabel* (*speaking to herself*). It is a love-drink—fy! 'tis nothing more—
I know 'tis nothing more;
And yet, methinks, its working is most strange!
The living flood seems curdling in my veins,
As it were caked to ice! The torches dance—
And the ground heaves. Gaston! where art thou, Gaston?
I see thee not—thine hand—thou didst not purpose
To poison thy poor Isabel, didst thou?

*Gaston.* Poison and Isabel! Thou art not poisoned—
Nor art thou Isabel.

*Isabel.* Ay, Gaston, both;
They've played thee false; thou'rt blameless; I have loved thee,
Say to thy mother that— (*She sinks to the ground.*)

*Gaston.* Help! help! O help!
A leech—a leech!

(Father Nicholas, Sir Ernalton, *and* Sir Espagne *lift the body, and lay it on a couch.*)

*Father Nicholas* (*stooping over it*).

Nor leech nor living man
Can help or hinder now! Death's sovereign seal
Is set authentic here—nor e'er was't set
Upon a brow more fair. But, gracious heaven!
This is no boy—it is a woman's form,
Surpassing beautiful!

*Sir Espagne and Sir Ernalton.* It is indeed.

*Gaston.* O fool! fool! fool!—not to have guessed me so—
Save but a woman who had loved like thee,
My murdered Isabel! Unknown I loved—
Unpurposed I've destroyed thee! Where is thy dagger?
(*To the* COUNT.)
That dagger reached so bravely to the heart
Of Peter of Ernaut? Here—sheathe it here—
And do it speedily, that I may follow
Ere I have breath to curse thee.

*Count.* Railer and poisoner!
Have then thy wish. (*Raising his poniard.*)

*Sir Espagne and Sir Ernalton* (*interposing*).

My lord, my lord! beseech thee—
Hold, in the name of heaven!

*Count.* A parricide—
Caught in the damned act!

*Viscount Roquebertin.* He is thy son—
Thou hast none other may inherit thee.
We would not have Monçada's noble house
Extinct, and by so fearful tragedy.

*Count.* Was it for this I tasked and travailed me,
Wasting the flowery foretime of my years

In bloody wars and tangled questionings,
With Armagnac, Navarre, the haughty kings
Of England and of France, to large his heritage,
And leave him lord of fairer provinces
Than e'er his fathers owned, that I might thus
Be, in the screward of my life, rewarded
With a kind cup of poison ?

*Viscount Roquebertin.* Good my lord,
There is some mystery here. I'll not believe me
He knew the nature of that mortal drug ;
And 'tis a question should be searched into
More in our cool of blood.

*Count.* Be't so—be't so, then :
Would I might think with you ! In the meanwhile,
Sir Menault of Noailles, he is thy prisoner.
Have him sure warded in the Castle-tower—
Thy life shall answer for his custody !

[*Exit the* COUNT, *followed by most of the guests.* GASTON *has thrown himself on the body of* ISABEL, *insensible to all that is passing.* FATHER NICHOLAS, SIR ESPAGNE, *and* SIR ERNALTON, *surround him.* SIR MENAULT OF NOAILLES, *advancing slowly and mournfully towards him, lays his hand gently on* GASTON'S *shoulder. The scene closes.*

END OF ACT IV.

# ACT V.

## Scene First.

PAMPELUNA—A HIGH-WALLED GARDEN NEAR THE PALACE.

(*Within are seen, walking about, deputies from the chief towns of Navarre, confined here by order of the King, for refusing their consent to a tax of two hundred thousand florins, demanded by him. The deputies crowd together near the garden-gate.*)

1*st Deputy.* Another day—another weary day
Of stinted fare and blank captivity!
Men of Navarre and brother deputies,
Three of our number, and the worthiest three,
Have paid in forfeit for their honest speech
The reckoning of their lives. How stand ye purposed?
Shall we decree this new and monstrous impost,—
The last as yet unlevied, from a land
Too scourged to furnish it—and when, by them
Did send us here, we're called to render compt
For this our stewarding, confess for cause
A roofless prison was our council-house—
Halter and axe the arguments did move us?

Or are ye purposed, like that noble three,
To bide the venture of an honest vote,
And say the tyrant *nay?*

*All.* That is our purpose.

1 *Dep.* Then Heaven have mercy on his soul whom next
King Charles ennobleth by his headsman's hatchet!

*All.* Amen!

2 *Dep.* Yet, is't not strange, these fifteen days now past,
Nor Charles himself, nor lord is of his council,
Hath come to visit us!—none save those fetch us
Our daily dole, and vanish silently.

3 *Dep.* And that same dole besides hath bettered it,
Both quantity and kind. What may it token?
Royal remorse, or some new stratagem
To compass his intent?

1 *Dep.* The last, besure thee:
But hush!—our food-bearers!

(*Enter an Officer, followed by attendants, bearing food for the deputies; after placing which on stone tables, they depart.*)

1 *Dep.* (*to the officer, who is preparing to follow them.*)
Sir countryman! who hast ungracious office
Performed thee ever in a gracious spirit,
May it be pardoned us to ask thee why
The King vouchsafes no more his daily visit,
Nor any of his lords? and who doth merit
The thanks we fain would pay for bettered means
To eke out life in our captivity?

*Officer.* I plead me guilty to your latter charge ;
For guilt I know 'twill be imputed me
If the King live—
1 *Dep.* If the King live, saidst thou ?— ..
Is the King ill ?
*Officer.* These fifteen days he 's sick
Of a sore fever, which a strange mischance
Hath turned, I think, to mortal.
1 *Dep.* Be 't permitted thee,
Pray thee, inform us what hath happened him.
*Officer.* His Queen, ye know, is dead.
1 *Dep.* Ay, I remember me,
Her death was sudden and mysterious,
On that same week her brother of France had lost
His Queen in child-bearing.
*Officer.* Since then, he loves
A young Castilian of surpassing beauty
With dotage more beseemed a hot-reined stripling
Than sober-nerved threescore. One night in bed
With this his paramour, a burning fever
Did seize him suddenly—the which there followed
A shivering aguey cold ; to banish which,
Chafing his bed with basins of hot coals,
The sheets, wherein they had too closely folded him,
Were set on fire ; and he, ere they might rescue him,
Was burnt to nearly dead. The chief renowned
For leech-craft and chirurgery through Spain,
France, and Navarre, are in attending on him ;
But, though his wounds be hopeful on the heal,
His fever hath returned.

1 *Dep.* If he do live,
Then Heaven have mercy on our souls!
*Officer.* And mine!
1 *Dep.* And if he die, on his!
*Officer.* Amen! Sir Deputy.
I do mine office; but I pity you. [*Exit Officer.*

---

## Scene Second.

THE SAME—THE PALACE.

(KING CHARLES *reclining on a couch, sick—Physicians in attendance.*)

*Charles.* Can ye no more? Have ye no draught may slake
This everlasting thirst?—no drug, nor drench
Shall drown this fire that feeds upon my life?
No herb of power to strength and string anew
This sickness-slackened frame?
1 *Physician.* We have, your Highness,
Taxed our poor means unto the uttermost.
Would our success had answered our intending!
*Charles.* Yet are ye held through Western Christendom
The chiefest in your art.
1 *Phy.* There 's one we shame not
To call our master in the healing art.
*Charles.* And who is he?
1 *Phy.* The learned Giovanni
Of Acquaviva.
*Charles.* Ha! But he is not

Profest mediciner. Is he reputed
So chief a master in your faculty?

1 *Phy.* In drugs have power to temper with due heat
The wholesome course of blood, whose various flow
Doth clog or clear the secret wheels of life,
Virtued from herbs and minerals of all sorts,
This teeming earth brings forth in wood or wold,
Mountain or mine mephitic, this Italian
For knowledge hath no peer.

*Charles.* I do believe it.

1 *Phy.* His art hath brought most strange effects to pass.

*Charles.* It hath indeed.

1 *Phy.* Thou 'st heard of them?

*Charles.* Ay, ay,
And seen of them!

1 *Phy.* Then, good your Highness, please
Call in this learned man.

*Charles.* But he 's an heretic—
Doth underlie the Pope's anathema.
If I should call him to my body's rescue,
Shall I not peril my soul's health thereby?

1 *Phy.* With that, my lord, our art concerns it not;
We deal but with the body's maladies,
Vouching Giovanni for a master there.
With higher matters we do meddle not—
'Tis ghostly doctor must resolve thee them.

*Charles.* Thanks, learned sirs. I will consider me
Of this your counsel. Leave me for a space—
I would repose.

1 *Phy.* To give our remedies

Their true effect, we do beseech your Highness
Study a tranquil mind. [*Exeunt Physicians.*

*Charles* (*solus*). A tranquil mind!
As easy bid me with a wish be whole!
Unact that I have done—remember it,
And yet forget—repent of that I love—
Forgive and yet revenge—be happy, yet
Wish I had ne'er been born—or aught beside
To human will is mere impossible,
As keep a tranquil mind! Is 't the sick body
Fevers the mind, I wonder me, or mind,
With its foul fantasies, hell-born and horrible,
Awake, asleep, feeds with eternal fire
The body's malady? This constant wakefulness
Unstrengths me utterly; yet sleep I dare not—
That hath a world more damned than the waking—
Where all that hath been, and where all that may be,
Bodied to scenes of living realty,
Do show so fearfully akin to truth,
That when I wake asweat with agony,
My fevered frame is with the pause of sleep
Not strengthed but feebled! Then, this cursed news
From Orthes comes so all inopportunely!
The damsel 's dead - that 's certain—that the boy
Hath followed, probable:—And 'tis my hope
His father's hot conditions lent not leisure
To shrift the burden on the rightful shoulders—
If so, I 'm safe! Nay, nay— there is no safety
While this Italian lives. There 's that he knoweth
Were better with him in the charnel-house!

Would 'twere his lips, not hers, that silly child,
Had drained our druggèd cup! And yet, alas!
I may not spare him yet. That leech said true—
There is no herber nor mediciner
Throughout all Christendom for master's knowledge
In means of art to length or limit life
Is Giovanni's peer. But dare I trust him?
We have had fellowship in fearful things!
One grain of powder—one distilled drop
Of his fell alchemy—would physic me,
Fever and feeling too! But oh, this sickness
It burns and burns—it drinks and dries me up
The bowelled springs of life! I 'll use his art;
And yet as one doth use 't mistrustfully.—
What, ho!—who waits?

(*Enter a servant.*)

Bid Signior Giovanni
Attend me presently. [*Exit servant.*

---

## Scene Third.

THE SAME—THE STUDY OF GIOVANNI.

(GIOVANNI *alone, holding in his hand a phial containing a dark-coloured fluid.*)

*Giovanni.* Who hath the blacker reckoning—I who willed,
Or he who could but wish? 'Tis true, I guessed not
The life was levelled at. What then? I knew

The borrower asked it for a damnèd use!
Oh! that my messenger hath reached in time
To clear that guiltless boy! Would I might tarry
To know the issue! But it may not be.
I 've ta'en my farewell of my last of suns—
I've looked my last on the fair furnishing
Of earth and sky, whereon I've gazed so long,
And worshipped with too fond idolatry!
Welcome, thou cordial, that hast never failed
To give thy quaffer rest! My true viaticum!
Were it not well—the devil doth whisper me—
My tempter pledged me in the damnèd cup
We've brewed so oft for others? But no, no!
The hour of death doth make a freeman of me.
One mortal sin I will refrain at least!
They tell me he is sick—
Past cure, 'tis said—past quiet, I am certain!
I will not tarry his companioning,
But on mine evil journey post alone,
Uncompanied, unwarned, unwarranted.
O guiltless Queen! O gallant De la Cerda!
O gentle Isabel! sweet exquisite flower
Hell-mildewed in the blowing—see I not,
In the foul mirror of this guilty glass,
Your shadowy shapes beckoning your murderer
To his black audit? I obey the summons:—
Farewell the pride of knowledge, and the power!
Pride turned to shame—power to dishonoured dust.
Oh! when I knelt me in my vain of heart
At that proud well, and deemed that from the draught

I rose a god—had Heaven in mercy stricken me
To mazed idiot who doth look on nature
As doth the ruminating ox, nor asks
Beyond the outward show and circumstance,
Why it is thus or thus !

(*Knocking heard at the door of his chamber.*)

Who comes unwished
Between me and my rest ? Gonsalvo—

(*Enter a servant.*)

*Gonsalvo.* Signior,
The King would speak with thee.

*Giovanni.* What—now ?

*Gons.* Ay, instantly.

*Giov.* Tell him I may not come ; I 'm on the readying me
For a long journey.

*Gons.* So methinks is he—
The longest and the last.

*Giov.* Is he so ill ?
What doth he want with me ?

*Gons.* I cannot tell :
He seems much sad of cheer. Some thought, it may be,
Or dying wish, he would unbreast to thee.

*Giov.* Ha ! true—it may be so ; and there be things
Whereof I were the meet confessioner :
I'll go with thee. [*Exeunt together.*

## Scene Fourth.

SCENE CHANGES TO ORTHES —APARTMENT IN THE CASTLE OF MONÇADA.

(Sir Yvain *and* Sir Menault de Noailles.)

*Sir Yvain.* Three days and nights! fasted three days and nights!
Sir Menault, didst thou say? Is't possible?
*Sir Menault.* E'er since the hour the body was removed,
Despite our arguments, entreaties, tears,
He hath nor ate, nor drank, nor slept, nor spoken!
Oh, good Sir Yvain, tell my lord his father
He dies a horrid death!
*Sir Yv.* It is a theme
I am forbid to speak on. Thou dost know
My father's hasty mood. I have already
Dangered my life in pleading for my brother.
*Sir Men.* Thou wouldst not let him perish in a dungeon
By death so horrible! A brother's life
Is worth a venture for. Oh! might the Count
But look one moment on him!—on that face
So fair, so fixed in utterness of woe—
That hath not speech nor sigh! There's not a menial
Among the keepers of his prison, is
So brutish or so pity-proof of nature,
But when he comes from looking on that sight
Doth brush aside a tear! He may not see
To-morrow's dawn, save by a miracle—

As thou dost love thy brother's life, delay not
To tell his father so.

*Sir Yv.* Betide what may,
Sir Menault, I will do't, even should the Count
Doom me his dungeon's mate.

*Sir Men.* And Heaven at need
Mete thee the mercy thou dost mete thy brother!

[*Exit* Sir Menault.

*Sir Yv.* (*solus.*) A self-killer! a spoiled and spleeny boy!
In a green sadness, quarrels with his life,
And starves himself to death! Were it not better
To have it chronicled and crownered so,
Than use the furthering of a borrowed help
Might risk the telling tales? But is't as certain?
There's nature's instinct and her foremost, clings
Even to forlornest life. He may relent
At the eleventh hour; or this Menault,
To save himself, bewray how timeously
He did report me, for his father's knowledge,
My brother's evil case; and my lord Count
Is sudden to remorse as to revenge,
And violent in both. But this same violence
I'll make my master card. With these petitions
From all the parts of Foix and Bierne,
Showered hourly on him at my secret prompting,
I've blown his anger to a tempest-tune
Against the people and their idol—sowing
Rumours concerning him, mysterious whisperings
Of plots and pacts and risings of the many,
To rescue him by force. Their clashing humours,

With skilful husbandry, may be improved
To bring me forth good fruit. I'll first go work me
The jealous father to the point of danger,
Then bring to parley with his moody son. [*Exit.*

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## Scene Fifth.

THE SAME—THE TOWER IN THE CASTLE OF MONÇADA.

(*At a table, on which food is placed,* GASTON *is discovered pale and dishevelled, his head resting on his hand, as absorbed in his own thoughts. Enter the* COUNT OF FOIX *and* SIR YVAIN,—*the former with an open knife, with which he has been paring his nails. They are followed by* SIR MENAULT DE NOAILLES.)

*Sir Menault.* Look there, my lord! Behold a spectacle
Might soften stone or steel! Upon that table,
His three days' food, untasted, unregarded!

*Count.* He heeds us not. Saidst thou this sullenness
Hath had but three days' growth?

*Sir Men.* Till then, my lord,
Though sadly, he returned our courtesies;
And passively, though sparely, and by signs
Tokened inappetite, he did partake
Of whatsoe'er we offered him for food.
But, ever since the hour whereon he heard
The bells proclaim removing of the body
O' the lady Isabel to Armagnac,

In that same posture thou behold'st him now,
He hath abidden—foodless, sleepless, speechless,
As though he had been fixed by miracle
Into a shape of stone.

*Count.* 'Tis wilfulness.

(*Approaching him.*)

Sirrah! why eatest thou not of that is brought?
Wilt thou sit rudely in thy father's presence?
Knowest thou not who I am? Deignest thou no answer to me?
This moveth in thee of an evil nature—
I 'll tame thy stubbornness. Eat, I command thee.

(*Pushing food nearer to him, and then shaking him roughly.* GASTON *rubs his eyes, as if awaking from sleep, and says, as speaking to himself*)—

*Gaston.* Poor Isabert! and thou wert Isabel!
Where art thou now?

*Count.* She's dead—ay, dead and buried:
'Twas thou didst murder her.

*Gaston* (*still speaking to himself*). Who spake of murder?
I loved thee well, and yet (*shuddering*) I murdered thee!
Murdered my Isabel! Fy! no, no, no.
'Twas he, that wicked man.

*Count.* Ha! say'st thou, traitor!

*Gaston.* She loved me well—she followed me—she did me
A menial's service!
And yet they murdered her! That cruel man!
How can he hope for heaven?

*Count.* Maligning villain!

'Twas thou didst poison her. Here—eat of this—
There is no poison on 't.

*Gaston (still to himself).* Fy ! fy ! 'twas false—
I told him so. They cannot make us love
Against the course of will. That terrible man !
Next time he 'll murder thee, but weep thee not,
Dear mother—we shall meet again all three,
Despite of him, in heaven—

*Count.* Villain ! wouldst charge me
With murder to my face ?

(*Seizing him by the throat with his left hand and shaking him violently.*)

*Sir Yv.* Oh, good my lord !
Pray thee forbear. Body and mind together,
His so long fast hath weaked—his reason wanders.

*Count.* There, traitor !—eat of that—or with this knife—

(*Holding it close to his throat.* SIR MENAULT *on the left side, and* SIR YVAIN *on the right, rush forward to arrest his arm. In pretending to do so,* SIR YVAIN, *in the confusion of the struggle, makes the* COUNT *run the knife deeply into* GASTON'S *neck. Blood gushes forth violently.*)

*Sir Men.* My lord, my lord ! what 's here ? What hast thou done ?
Oh, he will bleed to death ! Help, help, Sir Yvain !
Help for the love of heaven !

(*The* COUNT *starts back horror-struck.* SIR MENAULT *and* SIR YVAIN *busy themselves in bandaging the wound with a handkerchief.*)

*Sir Yv.* Oh, good Sir Menault !

Fly for a leech, beseech thee! I 'll support him
Till thou return. [*Exit* SIR MENAULT.
*Count.* He 's not badly hurt,
Yvain, is he?
*Sir Yv.* My lord, 'twas but a chance;
It may relieve his brain. Pray thee, retire,
Thy presence moves him. I 'll be his chirurgeon
Till better help arrives. Good Father Nicholas
Is learned in leech-craft. Would that he were here!
*Count.* 'Tis well bethought of thee. I'll send him straight.
Oh, damned Navarre! Oh, hasty mad Monçada!
[*Exit* COUNT.
*Sir Yv.* So, we 're alone. There! (*tearing off the bandage*)
—out and ebb thee dry—
Thou proud legitimate flood so long hast barred
Mine eager passage to the promised land
Lies on thy yonder side! Farewell, Sir Yvain,
The bastard of Lescar! and hail instead
Lord Yvain of Monçada! Sovereign Count
Of Foix and Bierne!—Not yet run out!
(*Pressing* GASTON'S *neck.*)
*Gaston* (*in a faint voice*).
'Tis a kind act, albeit unkindly done,
Yvain, by thee! Methought thou loved'st me as—
*Sir Yv.* The sunflower loves the hedge shuts out the sun;
The bird its cage's bar; the prisoner
The iron fasts him to his dungeon's floor;
The matron of sixteen that longs for weeds
The husband of threescore; as Florence of Lescar
Doth Agnes of Navarre!

*Gaston.* Then, death, come welcomed,
Even though thou come thus helped! 'Tis an ill world!
And yet one heart was in 't that loved me well;
But that is cold. And there 's another—thine,
My mother—fare-thee-well!—we 'll meet in heaven. (*Dies.*)

*Sir Yv.* Ay, now I can afford to weep. They're coming—
(*Kneels beside the body.*)
O Gaston! Gaston! O my dear, dear brother!

(*Enter* Sir Menault *and a* Surgeon.)

*Sir Men.* Sir Yvain weeping!—ha!—he is not dead.

*Sir Yv.* Look there. Look there!

*Surgeon.* Mine art is helpless here:
No power but heaven's can light that eye again.

(*Enter hastily the* Count *with an open letter in his hand, followed by* Father Nicholas.)

*Count.* Curst be Giovanni's laggard messenger
So tarried by the way! Where is my Gaston?
My boy—mine innocent—mine injured boy!
That I may press him to a father's heart:
Plead his forgiveness—weep for Isabel;—
Write on her monument.—But ha! thou 'rt weeping;—
He is not dead, Yvain; he is not dead?
Swear me he is not dead!

*Surgeon.* My lord! beseech thee,
Withdraw from this sad place.

*Count.* Here, learned sir!
Here is my coffer's key. They say I 'm rich—
What there is sepulchred, 'tis thine for ever,
Give me but back my boy.

*Surgeon.* O would I might!

'Twere done without a fee. But, good my lord,
Not all the gold that Indian rivers roll
Or Indian fables feign, can e'er re-breath
That breath-deserted dust.

*Count.* Again a murderer!

Hell's tool—my passion's slave—a murderer!
Blacker than he first stained the shuddering earth
With innocent blood—the murderer of my child!

*Father Nicholas.* Come to thy closet, 'tis mine office now.
The leech can stead thee not.

*Count.* O Gaston! Gaston!

Curst be the day thou wentest to Navarre!
And tenfold curst thy treacherous damnèd uncle!

[*Exeunt.*

---

## Scene Sixth.

THE SAME—AN APARTMENT IN THE CASTLE OF MONÇADA.

(*Enter* SIR YVAIN *with a paper in his hand which he has been reading.*)

*Sir Yv.* And so, Sir Bastard! thou 'rt Sir Bastard still—
Of this good world a citizen at large,
With what estate thy wit or weapon finds thee!
Was it that messenger came from Navarre,
I marvel me, or Sir Espagne de Leon,
Or Gratian, or—but boots it not to guess;—
'Tis certain all 's found out!—(*Reading*)—'At noon to-morrow,

Before the Lords of Foix and Bierne—
Murder and treason—compassing the death
Of the Count Gaston—Armagnac—Navarre.'
(*Dashing the paper with violence to the ground.*)
And this too when I thought of nothing but
How to enjoy my luck! Farewell to Foix!
But whitherward? There 's the hot Englishman,
Edward of Acquitaine, a prosperous soldier
And liberal of his largess to deservers.—
Witness his stipend of five hundred marks
In yearly revenue to Lord James of Audley,
For his brave acting in the field of Poitiers;—
And there 's young Charles of France, loves revellers,
Masquers, and mummers, quaint inventioners.
I 'm apt for either master; which to choose—
The devil!—my mother here!

(*Enter* FLORENCE OF LESCAR.)

*Florence.* Oh! wish thee joy,
My noble Count of Foix and Bigorre!
Viscount Bierne! But, ho! offends 't thy lordship
Reciting of thy styles? Oh, thou hast dressed
Thy looks in mourning and in modesty,
For courtly reasons, and by forms of court!
I had forgot me—we must put on sorrow!
Stay, stay! where art thou going in such haste?

*Sir Yv.* To the Black Prince.

*Florence.* Black Prince! To what Black Prince?

*Sir Yv.* To him of England, or to him of hell,
I care not which.

*Florence.* Ho! ho! Sir Count—already
The whims and airs of state! This windfall makes thee—

*Sir Yv.* The bastard of Lescar—a harlot's son!

(*Rushes out.*)

*Florence.* A harlot's son! He's mad! There's something wrong—
Some wheel, I fear, has ta'en the backward turn.
What can have chanced! Hath Gaston come alive!
I 'll follow him and know. [*Exit.*

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## Scene Seventh.

SCENE CHANGES TO PAMPELUNA—THE PALACE—THE STUDY OF GIOVANNI.

(GIOVANNI *and* GERONYMO, *a domestic of the palace.*)

*Giovanni.* By hired assassins, as I leave this chamber!
To-night, say'st thou?

*Geronymo.* Signior! 'tis even so.
I 've told thee by what chance I found it out.

*Giov.* I did not think there breathed the man did care
For Giovanni's life.

*Ger.* I know me two
Do in their daily prayers remember him.

*Giov.* Indeed!

*Ger.* Rememberest thou that deadly plague,
Three summers past, did rage in Pampeluna,
Sweeping its daily thousands?

*Giov.* Ay, full well—
It was a fearful time!

*Ger.* Hast thou forgotten thee
A groom was of the royal stables, lost
In one black week his wife and five fair children,
While he himself, with one remaining daughter,
Lay on a hopeless bed!

*Giov.* I do remember me.

*Ger.* Friend and physician—all had fled away
From that devoted hearth! Thou, like an angel
Of mercy, camest, and didst attend on them,
Without reward or fee, as patiently
As though their blood had kindered it with kings,
And nations blessed thee for thy ministry!
Thou saved'st our lives—I am Geronymo.

*Giov.* 'Twas a fair girl, thy daughter—doth she live?

*Ger.* To bless her father, and solicit heaven
Daily for her preserver.

*Giov.* (*aside.*) This smooths the pass to death!
I have not lived in vain.

(*Handing a bag of gold.*)

Here 's, good Geronymo,
For that kind girl says daily mass for me,
Whose worth o'erpasseth gold— incense unfee'd
From altar undefiled! 'Twill dower her beauty,
Though poorly pay my debt.

*Ger.* Pardon me, Signior:
What I have done, I did it not for hire—
What I will do, I do it but for love.
I am not poor—thou 'lt need it all. Beseech thee,

Flee for thy life! I will provide thee means
To further thine escape.
*Giov.* I 'm rich, Geronymo—
Ay, rich to superfluity! beyond
My utmost need on earth. Be thou my treasurer,
And that fair girl—the only hearts on earth
Have cared for Giovanni! If so chance
I need it, I 'll advise ye so—if not,
Deal with it as your own.
*Ger.* Upon thine oath, then,
Thou wilt reclaim it in thy need.
*Giov.* I swear it.
(*Handing the bag to* GERONYMO.)
Commend me to thy daughter, good Geronymo:
And so farewell! Fear not for me—I 'm safe.
I have forepurposed me my journey—'tis
A long and lonely one!
*Ger.* Farewell, kind Signior!
And Heaven be with thee! [*Exit* GERONYMO.
*Giov.* 'Twas a good man's prayer!
And that hath audience where count and king
Are names do pass for nought—the place whereto
My fearful journey tends. Thou, heartless tyrant!
Thank'st me with death for lengthening of thy life!
I had resolved to part in charity
With thee and all mankind; but thou, as ever,
Mine evil angel, comest to drive me on
To damned deeds! We will depart together—
Abide thou here, thou blessed minister,
Holy and health-giving!

(*Taking from his pocket a small phial, which he places in a drawer, whence he takes out another, which he puts in his pocket.*)

And in its stead,
To mock the death-designer, come thou forth
The death-dispenser!—instrument accursed
To an accursed office. 'Tis mine hour—
Arm thee, my spirit! for one trial more,
It is thy last on earth. [*Exit.*

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## Scene Eighth.

THE SAME—THE CHAMBER OF THE KING.

(CHARLES OF NAVARRE *and two Assassins.*)

*Charles.* These be the reasons do require his death,
And such the recompense ye earn for doing it.
Against all earthly questions I uphold you,
And here 's your warrant from all ghostly reckoning—
(*Handing a parchment.*)

1 *Assassin* (*after reading it*)—
He 's here denounced an excommunicate—
Severed from Holy Church—proclaimed accurst—
An heretic—a sorcerer—a practiser
Of arts inhibited and damnable—
Whose cutting off doth render heaven a debtor
And earn the Church's thanks. We 're satisfied
Our scruples are at end.

*Charles.* Hide in that closet
Until I summon ye ; and, be it possible,
Avoid the mark of blood.

2 *Assassin.* Trust us, your Highness ;
We 're strong enough to stop an old man's windpipe,
And shed no drops of blood.

(*The assassins enter the closet.*)

*Charles* (*solus*). His art is wonderful ! Measured with him,
Our learned'st leeches and mediciners
Show dwarfed to schoolboys ! What this foolish parchment
Doth nickname sorcery is but wisdom won
By learned penance, and the watch of years
Over the midnight lamp. His skill hath vanquished
My fever, and with it those ghostly terrors
That were but fever-born. But is it meet
I thus should short his life did mine prolong,
And might at need again ? It must be so.
I 'm in his mercy, and methinks he knows it—
He sulks o' late ; and should he turn informer,
He 'll find a patron one will fee him well
In Gaston of Monçada.

(*Enter* GIOVANNI.)

Ha ! Giovanni !
I must inaugur thee my chief physician !
Thou 'st made me all but whole. My fever 's left me ;
And but these slack disvigoured limbs want bracing,
I were myself again. Hast brought the cordial
Thou promised'st to that end ?

*Giov.* Behold it here !

It is a sovereign one. When thou hast drunk it,
Thy malady will need no further cure.

*Charles.* It is the use of kings to have their taster;
Thou wilt essay 't for me.

*Giov.* 'Tis meet I should.

(*Takes a wine-glass, into which he pours part of the liquid contained in the phial.*)

*Charles.* Nay, nay, not all! Thou 'lt rob me of my due,
Leave me the larger half.

*Giov.* (*drinks.*) My lord, the king!
Well, do this drug its office on us both,
And need no seconding!

(*Handing another wine-glass to the King, after pouring into it the remaining contents of the phial.*)

*Charles.* Amen! Giovanni—
The parting cup is evermore, a kindly,
Cheerly I pledge thee in 't. (*Drinks.*)

(*Enter a Servant, who presents a letter to the* KING.)

*Servant.* My lord, from Orthes
A messenger in haste. [*Exit servant.*

*Charles.* From Orthes, saidst thou?

(*After perusing the letter.*)

Ho, Manuel!—Perez! (*Enter assassins from closet.*)
Seize that murderous villain!
I have from Orthes here most damned news.
How th' Lady Isabel was foully poisoned,
Ye know already; and 'tis shown me here,
That young Count Gaston by his father's hand
Hath died in prison.

*Giov.* By his father's hand!

*Charles.* On false suspect of purposed parricide.

*Giov.* 'Tis time that I were dead!

*Charles.* It is indeed!

There is the murderer! 'Twas he did brew
That deadly drink did poison Isabel—
'Twas he, in compact with the bastard Yvain,
Did compass the Count's death,—failing therein,
They charged the sin upon my nephew's head—
That guiltless murdered boy!

*Assassins* (*rushing to seize* GIOVANNI). The bloody villain!
To death with him!

*Giov.* Off! off! ye men of blood!
Forbear an useless crime. A surer deathsman
Is dealing fast with me. Look to your hirer—
He had the deadlier draught.

*Charles* (*letting the letter drop, and falling back on his couch*).

My brain 's on fire!
My fever hath returned—call Giovanni—
Ha! ye have murdered him—O villains, villains!
Your lives shall answer it. (*Starting up deliriously.*)
Ho! who are these?
These terrible ones have entered suddenly!
Thou art the Queen—I know thou'st come to swear
I poisoned thee! Aha!—Sir Constable!
I know thee well—thou 'rt Charles de la Cerda,
Come from thy grave to blab too! And that 's Isabel,
With that pale face! Nay, nay—no weeping at me—
I did not poison thee! And here is Gaston!
Swear as ye will, I will deny it bravely,

And so will Giovanni. Shall we not?
He will not swear; and yet I fee'd him well.
(*A loud shriek is heard from an adjoining chamber.*)
Hark! that 's my call—it summons me to judgment—
I know it very well. (*Enter* GONSALVO.)
Do I not, villain?
Whose voice was that?
*Gonsalvo.* It was thy lady sister's.
Soon as she heard the woful news from Orthes,
She fell distraught—
*Giov.* Distraught!
*Gons.* Ay, raving mad—
Did ye not her hear shriek?
*Charles.* Hush! hush! Gonsalvo!
Beseech thee tell her not 'twas I did murder them.
O hide me from her rage! She 's here! she 's here!
*Gons.* Where is she, good my lord?
*Charles.* There—up! up! up!
Holding that damned phial o'er my head—
Whence she is pouring streams of hot hell-fire
Upon my brain! It burns—it burns—and now—
And now—and now—and now! (*Dies.*)
(*Another shriek is heard.*)
*Giov.* Poor Agnes of Navarre! Hast thou too risen
In judgment on me? O for deeper draught
Of that kind medicine!
2 *Assassin* (*advancing to seize* GIOVANNI).
Accursed sorcerer!
1 *Assass.* Nay, Perez, hold. Dost thou not see he 's dying?
*Giov.* Sorcerer, saidst thou? Knowledge misused

Is the true sorcery, and its inheritance
The curse thou dowerest it by. I die unblest,
My name a byword, and my life a lesson
How near of kin to crime is cowardice,
The abject spirit that suborns the will,
To wink at crime or lend the doer help
For a slave's wage, a roof to cover him,
And crib to safely feed. I die accurst,—
My light extinguished, and my labour lost,—
Might have commanded for my living fame
Empires for theatre, and at my death,
The tears of nations for mine epitaph. (*Dies.*)

THE END.

# EDBURGA.

## A Tragedy.

IN FIVE ACTS.

# PREFACE.

The leading incidents in the following drama belong to history. They will be found recorded by Asser, Ingulphus, and other Anglo-Saxon authorities. To this class of facts belong the treacherous murder of Ethelbert, and subsequent seizure of his kingdom by his father-in-law, Offa; the retreat of his widow to Croyland Abbey, where she spent the residue of her years, and became eminent for sanctity; the marriage of her sister Edburga with Beortric; his death by the poison which she had designed for his favourite, Worr; her flight to France; the scene betwixt her and Charlemagne; her misconduct in the Abbey to which she was sent by the Emperor (not, however, as in the drama, for penance, but as Abbess); her extrusion from the Abbey; her subsequent wanderings and abandoned life, and her actual begging, attended by a little girl, in the streets of Pavia; the banishment of Egbert, and its cause; his serving under Charlemagne; his accession to the throne of Wessex on the death of Beortric; his reducing the other kingdoms of the Heptarchy under his single sovereignty, as acknowledged Bretwalda; and his forgiving Witlaf, and reinstating him as King of Mercia on the intercession of Ethelburga.

In some of the minor particulars, history has, for dramatic purposes, been slightly deviated from,—as in the escape of Worr, and in making one Abbot of Croyland during the period embraced by the action, whereas there were two, the name of neither being Wynhelm, but that of the one, Patrick, that of the other, Siward.

The remaining incidents, the character of Kenred, the circumstances preceding and causing the deaths severally, of Ethelbert, Beortric, Edburga, etc., etc., are additions to the historical matter for which the author alone is responsible. It may be proper to state that the widow of Ethelbert is not uniformly named Ethelburga by the Anglo-Saxon historians. Roger Hoveden calls her Elfleda; and from a deed recorded by Ingulphus it would seem that her real name was neither Ethelburga nor Elfleda, but Edeldritha. This confusion of names is exceedingly common among the Anglo-Saxon writers, and is a constant cause of perplexity to the historical inquirer.

# Dramatis Personæ.

## MEN.

| | |
|---|---|
| CHARLEMAGNE, | *Emperor of the Franks.* |
| CHARLES, | *His eldest Son.* |
| OFFA, | *Mercia.* |
| BEORTRIC, | *Kings of* — *Wessex.* |
| ETHELBERT, | *East Anglia.* |
| EGBERT, | *West Saxon Lords.* |
| WORR, | *West Saxon Lords.* |
| ALRED, | *West Saxon Lords.* |
| ETHELMUND, | *West Saxon Lords.* |
| KENRED, | *A Mercian Lord.* |
| WYNHELM, | *Abbot of Croyland.* |
| ALCUIN, | *A learned Anglo-Saxon residing at the Court of Charlemagne.* |
| EGINHART, | *The Secretary of Charlemagne.* |

*Groom—Butler, etc.*

## WOMEN.

| | |
|---|---|
| EDBURGA, | *Daughters of King Offa.* |
| ETHELBURGA, | *Daughters of King Offa.* |
| DRITHA, | *The infant Daughter of Edburga.* |
| HILDEGARDE, | *An Abbess.* |

*Cottage Dame—Attendant Ladies, etc.*

*The scene is laid partly in England and partly at Aix-la-Chapelle, the residence of Charlemagne. Between the close of Act II. and the commencement of Act III., between the end of Act III. and the beginning of Act IV., and between the event with which Act IV. concludes and the scene with which Act V. opens, a considerable portion of time is supposed to elapse. In the first and last of these cases the interval includes a period of some years.*

# ACT I.

## Scene First.

TAMWORTH IN STAFFORDSHIRE—THE PALACE OF OFFA.

(*Enter* EGBERT *and* ETHELBERT.)

*Egbert.* Another sigh! Why, an thou blow it thus,
Thou 'lt scant thy lungs of air, and grow from habit
Confirmed asthmatical. Confess me now,
Sir Corydon, that sigh was not Edburga's.
*Ethelbert.* I do confess 't.
*Egb.* Nay, then, in breaking wind
Thou 'st broke the canon law. It rules thee dead.
Thou 'rt but the carcase of a bachelor,
The life and liberty gone out! Why, man,
Thou art as well as married to Edburga.
But tell me, this incognita, was she
So mere a miracle of flesh and blood,
That she eclipsed thy bride?
*Ethel.* It made me start
When first I looked upon the Mercian princess,

They were so like in form and lineament,
I deemed it was herself.

*Egb.* What lacks she then,
A cast so like, and from a royal mould,
To move an equal love?

*Ethel.* The soul, Egbert,
That lifes the lineaments. Hast never found
Two shells were like, had kernels most unlike?

*Egb.* Not till I cracked them. But when, where, beseech thee,
Saw'st thou this paragon?—asleep or waking?

*Ethel.* At Croyland Abbey.

*Egb.* Ha! ha! ha! Beshrew me!
At Croyland Abbey! I have heard that Croyland,
For monks and abbots was a land of Goshen,
An earthly paradise for plums, and pippins,
And orchard trees, but never heard till now
Of strolling damsels there, to pluck the fruit,
And tempt stray bachelors. Who was this Eve?

*Ethel.* In sooth I do not know. She would not tell me,
Nor would the Abbot, though I pressed them both.

*Egb.* Ah, sly old Canticles! I warrant him.
But when fell all this out?

*Ethel.* The Abbot was
My father's friend, and on my journey hither,
I turned aside to visit him. My chamber
Looked on a lovely spot, the Abbey's gardens,
Fast by the margin of the lake inisles
St. Guthlac's monastery. As I looked forth
At early dawn upon that scene, as though

I had awoke in Eden, lake and lawn,
Orchard, and arbour, wood, and winding walk,
Flower-beds, and terraces that spread below,
A fair young creature with a book in hand,
With noiseless step stole from the Abbey forth,
And sought a quiet walk embowered in shade,
Along the ripply margin of the lake,
Unseen of all but me. For a long hour,
With eye unlifted from the page, she paced
That alley up and down—

*Egb.* Till thou, I warrant thee,
Didst break her musing's thread.

*Ethel.* At that same hour
Next morn I did. Oh, Egbert! hadst thou marked
The modest mantling of her cheek, confused
To be so caught, as though 'twere shame and sin
In Mercian maid that she had learned to read!
Till more assured when she had found that I
Was book-taught too, one hour, one little hour
We interchanged of soul.—One blessed hour
Outworths my rest of life!—

*Egb.* Did she take wing
And fly to heaven outright, that thou no more
Saw'st this angelical?

*Ethel.* Where'er she went,
I never saw her more. But 'twas not she,
I think, but the Abbot, crossed our after meeting;
For, as I questioned him concerning her,
He shunned reply—discoursed of other things,
And looked, methought, displeased.

*Egb.* The Mercian princess,
Doth she suspect why thou 'rt so tame a lover?

*Ethel.* I know nor care not, sooth. So she be made
East Anglia's Queen, 'tis all I bargained for,
And is not that enough?

*Egb.* Not for Edburga.
If I have read her truly, she 's not one
Will be content with halves in anything.
I would not evil-speak thy bride. But I
Have been a sojourner at Offa's court
A longer time than thou.

*Ethel.* And I enough
To read thy riddle out. Haughty Edburga!
How like, yet how unlike that angel form
Replaceth her in dreams!

*Egb.* Hush! hush! she 's here.
Nay, there is no escape—she hath observed us.
Thy Queen to be will have her queenly dues.
So pray discloud thee of that tragedy brow,
And put some mettle to thy tortoise pace.
Else more than half-way must the lady meet us,
And cry out shame on our ungallantry. [*Exeunt.*

---

## Scene Second.

THE SAME—ANOTHER APARTMENT.

(WYNHELM *and* ETHELBURGA *entering.*)

*Wynhelm.* I 've said farewell to all except thyself.
And now, sweet Ethelburga,

That I have lodged thee in a mother's arms,
I must speed back to Croyland to my cell,
Where, as I wander by our lone lake's side
At morn or moonlight, I shall miss me much
My gentle scholar.

*Ethelburga.* Nay, but remember now
Thy promise touching that.

*Wynh.* (*laughing.*) Oh, do not fear it.
Albeit, methinks, from Alcuin's ancient friend
Thou need'st not shame t' have learned what from the lips
Of Alcuin's self, imperial Charles, the lord
Of all the western world, in his grey age
Doth reverently receive. The time shall come
When royal maidens will not blush to own
That they can read and write.

*Ethel.* Perhaps it may;
But till it come, our secret be our secret.
When Alcuin's book hath undergone thy judgment,
I pray thee send it me—but secretly.
And when thou musest by the stilly shore
Of that dear lake, or mid the hermit woods
Of lone Ancarrig, think on Ethelburga,
And that her spirit hovers o'er the scene
She loved and loves so well!

*Wynh.* And should misfortune,
Whose frost-blight spares not even the head of kings,
Light upon Ethelburga, in her need
In Guthlac's holy isle let her be sured
Of a dear welcome and a quiet cell.

*Ethel.* In my necessity it is the home

That I would haste to ; and so much I love it,
That I could find it in my heart to pray
For some calamity shall force me thither.

*Wynh.* Nay, say not so !—'twere sin. Sorrows will come,
More than enough, although they be not prayed for.
But 'tis mine hour—

*Ethel.* That boon, the only one
I ever asked in vain—wilt thou not tell me
Who was that stranger youth ?

*Wynh.* I fear that stranger
Doth sit too near thy heart. Think of him only
As of a dream hath passed. Think otherwise,
Thy thought is sin —why, thou wilt learn ere long.
Heaven bless thee, my fair child—farewell—forget not
What thou hast learned at Croyland.

*Ethel.* I 'll attend thee
To th' outer gate, and crave thy blessing there.

[*Exeunt.*

---

## Scene Third.

THE SAME.

(*Enter* EDBURGA, *attended by* EGBERT *and* ETHELBERT.)

*Edburga.* Nay, on my word !—I will be judged by Egbert—
I counted them. That last was sigh the twentieth
Within these dozen minutes, thou hast heaved
As thine heart were a draw-well. He 's in love,
Egbert, forlorn in love.

*Egb.* Nay, 'tis his lungs
That are forlorn of air. They work not well ;
They lack the bellows-mender.
*Ed.* Out upon thee !
Thou art a bitter jester. But confess now,
Have I not cause for jealousy ? He loves
Some fair East Anglian, whose absence causes
All this wind-heaving. Come, acknowledge, Egbert,
Hath he not owned it thee ?
*Egb.* She must be fairer
Than the creation of a painter's dream,
Or the Arabian prophet's ecstasy,
If fair Edburga need be jealous of her.
*Ed.* There, Ethelbert ! when wilt thou learn to dress me
So brave a compliment ?—

(*Enter* ETHELBURGA.)

Ha ! sister—come
In lucky time to second me—

(ETHELBERT *starts and stands as amazed on the entering of* ETHELBURGA.)

*Ethelburga.* The Abbot—
Would ere he go. But, gracious heavens ! who 's that ?
*Ed.* An ogre, it would seem, or cannibal,
Or wild man of the woods, thou look'st so frightened.
I do not think that either means to eat thee.
Why, that, thou know'st, is Egbert ; this, Prince Ethelbert,
Who feigns himself my suitor.
*Ethelburga.* Ethelbert !

*Ethelbert.* And art thou Ethelburga, then? Ah, why
Didst thou not tell me so?

*Ed.* Because I guess
She saw thee ne'er till now. Didst thou?

*Ethelburga* (*confused*). I—I—

*Ed.* I—I—and gracious Heaven!
What means this mumming and this mystery?
Why, Ethelbert, she but returned last night
After long months of absence, with old Wynhelm,
Her ghostly counsellor, from Croyland Abbey—
Ye never met before?

*Ethelbert.* It fell by accident,
For a brief space—

*Ed.* Indeed!

*Ethelburga.* Nay, sister, pray thee,
The good old Abbot waits. Beseech thee, haste,
Else we shall be too late.

(*She hurries out of the apartment, followed slowly and haughtily by* EDBURGA.)

*Ethelbert.* By heaven and earth, Egbert!
The rarest, luckiest—plagues and palsies on him,
That marplot priest, that close-mouthed abbot, why
Would he not tell her name?

*Egb.* 'Tis now too late.

*Ethelbert.* Too late, saidst thou? I will straightway to Offa,
Avouch my love, proclaim my vowed resolve,
Save Ethelburga, other wife or queen,
To never wed on earth.

*Egb.* But, say he yields—

As much I fear he 'll not,—on Saxon maid
To be forsaken, is, thou know'st, a stain
Held ineffaceable, save by his blood
Hath put the wrong on her ; nor is Edburga
One apt to err upon the gentle side—
Besides, 'tis my belief she loves thee.

*Ethelbert.* Ha !

*Egb.* And passionately too.

*Ethelbert.* Impossible !—
I never gave her cause.

*Egb.* Oh, snow itself,
Thou know'st, will gender heat.

*Ethelbert.* Then let it gender
Ashes or icicles, I care not which.
I 'll none of her ; nor none but Ethelburga,
So I will tell the king. [*Exit.*

*Egb.* St. Alban speed thee !
But thou art dealing with a devil, fears me
Will turn thy love-romaunt to tragedy. [*Exit.*

---

## Scene Fourth.

ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE SAME.

(*Enter* ETHELBURGA.)

*Ethelburga.* 'That stranger youth doth sit too near thy heart,'
So said good Wynhelm, and he guessed too true.

'Think of him only as a dream hath passed.'
Yet dreams there have been that did print their memory
On a long after life; and one such dream
Hath Ethelburga dreamed! 'Think otherwise,
Thy thought is sin.' It is—alas! alas! I know it;
Yet day and night that sinful dream I dream,
Yet day and night that sinful thought I think!
My sister's husband—her affianced husband—
How proudly doth she look on me! And I—
I quail before her like a guilty thing,
As I had done her wrong. Where shall I hide
The tell-tale flushings of this guilty cheek,
Or still the tremblings of this guilty heart?
Oh! would I ne'er had known, or ne'er had left
Thy cloistered walls and sanctuary isle,
Beloved Croyland! Ha! my father here!—
And Ethelbert. Oh, conscious coward heart! [*Exit.*

(*Enter* OFFA *and* ETHELBERT.)

*Offa.* Now, by my troth, there needs no gownsman, Ethelbert,
Is learned in the law, to be thy pleader:
Thou 'st pled thy cause like a schooled orator.

*Ethelbert.* Rather, my lord, like one unschooled, unskilled,
Has had no fee but feeling, and no master
To teach him but his heart.

*Offa.* And that, beshrew me,
Is after all his surest schoolmaster
Would helm the human will. The fair report
Rumour discoursed of thee, begat my wish
To have thee for a son. The wish is doubled

Now that report is knowledge. So thou art
My son-in-law, in sooth I care not much
Which of the two thou wedd'st. But then thou knowest
To be deserted 's to our Saxon maids
Dishonour held, and mortal injury :—
And my Edburga has, I think, in reason,
A Saxon maiden's pride.

*Ethelbert.* My lord, to her
I 've been a formal, cold, unworthy lover,
And, doubt me nothing, fair Edburga holds me
In secret scorn or mere indifference.

*Offa.* That were conclusion most presumable
In all things else but Love. He is a reasoner
Hath logic of his own. But, howsoever,
I 'll feel how plays her pulse, and then report thee
Mine answer to thy suit.

*Ethelbert.* And I the while
Await my sentence with the like patience
As doth the gyvèd wretch whose fate is poised
Upon his doomsman's lips, the doubtful air
That words him life or death. [*Exit* ETHELBERT.

*Offa* (*solus*). But yesterday and this boy's whim had vexed me ;
To-day 'tis opportune. I cursed my wife
That all her chicks, save one poor featherling,
Were of the worser kind. But, sooth to own it,
They 've stood my purpose in more furthering stead
Than would a dozen boys! With one I 've bribed
The weak Northumbrian. Another meshes
This young East Anglian King. And now Beortric,

The new-made King of Wessex, wears that crown.
The only one that may compete with mine,
Would wive the one is left! 'Tis well. Edburga
Will fit him best. He 's soft, and she will king 't
O'er him as I o'er her. Whereas this Ethelbert,
Albeit a booksman, hath, I find in him,
A royal spirit: he 'll not be wife-ridden;—
So let him have the gentle Ethelburga.
She hath a loving heart, and will, at least,
Be a peace-pledge betwixt us.

But Edburga,
How will she stomach this indignity?
Rejected plump upon comparison,
And by a wooer, too, hath in him may
Content her sex's wish i' th' flesh or spirit!
She 's proud—and to the hot blood of a woman
Joins the strong will of man. Would her poor brother,
The Ethling Ecfrid, might change sex with her!
Ay, there 's the bait wherewith to angle her—
A prouder title and an easier lord
Will let her play the king!

Would Kenred came!
He must to Wessex as my doer there,
To hush Edburga; and help to the birth,
My glorious scheme of curdling into one
This cracked and crumbling hexarchy. But ha!
Upon my very wish! (*Enter* KENRED.)

Kenred, I doubt me
Thou art a wizard, and hast fee'd the devil!
Thou art from Merlin's land, where carles, they tell me,

With clouds for cushions, navigate the sky!
'Twas but this instant I did long for thee,
And lo! thou art! Didst horse it on a broom-stick?
But whatsoe'er the manner or the means,
I 'm glad to see thee.

*Ken.* My good lord, I thank thee;
I am but new arrived.

*Offa.* How speeds our work,
That endless dyke hath bled my coffers so,
These long three years?

*Ken.* To thine heart's wish completed,
O'er marsh, and moor, and stream, an hundred miles,
From Wye's mouth to the Dee, to the last stone,
A glorious monument to Offa's fame!

*Offa.* A glorious muniment to Offa's realm,
I trust me too, is 't not?

*Ken.* 'Tis Briton-proof.

*Offa.* Wilt thou so warrant it?

*Ken.* Against all odds,
With its steel lining, thy brave Saxon colonists,
Though Arthur's self were come from his long nap
To head his Britons, and, for engineers,
Brought Merlin with him, and the fay Morgana.
Would Heaven that Wessex and East Anglia
Were but so dyked and ditched! Then wert thou lord
Of this misruly hexarchy. Our isle,
Albeit too small to be con-acred thus,
Would make one pretty farm.

*Offa.* It would, Kenred;

And so one day it shall. But thou and I
Will be worms' meat ere then.

*Ken.* Why so, my lord?
Thy son-in-law wears in Northumbria
A weak unquiet crown. Essex and Kent
Own thee for overlord. And could East Anglia
By force or fee be won, Wessex must fall,
And Mercia's king in wide Sax-Anguland
Sit monarch paramount.

*Offa.* East Anglia's king
Is here.

*Ken.* Indeed, my lord! King Ethelbert—

*Offa.* And thou art come in time to guest his wedding;
He weds my daughter.

*Ken.* How, my lord!—thy daughter!
Weds he thy daughter? Doth he wed Edburga?

*Offa.* I said not so.

*Ken.* My lord, didst thou not say
He weds thy daughter?

*Offa.* I have two of them.

*Ken.* True, true; thou hast. Ha! ha!—and so King Ethelbert
Weddeth fair Ethelburga, then. Beshrew me,
I 'm glad thereof. Ha! ha! What made me think
It was Edburga!

*Offa.* Thou didst hold it reason,
The earlier born should be the earlier bride.
I wished it so myself. But Ethelbert,
Like the old-time Jew, affects the younger sister.
Thou know'st it hath been said that love delights

To work by contraries. The puny dwarf
Would climb a giant's bed. Beauty doth pair
With ugliness; the stormy with the still.
And so I hoped the gentle Ethelbert ,,
Would choose my bold Edburga.

*Ken.* And Edburga,
How brooks she it?

*Offa.* She will not long be taxed
To wear the willow, for a prouder crown
Wooes her accepting.

*Ken.* Ha! a prouder crown!

*Offa.* The crown of Wessex, with Beortric's hand.

*Ken.* Beortric! Doth not Egbert then succeed
To murdered Kynwulf?

*Offa.* No. The younger line
Excludes the elder still. The exiled Egbert
Is my guest too; and I had purposed
To mate him with Edburga, and dis-strength
My dangerous neighbour with domestic schism,
And wars pretexted to enforce their claim.
But now Beortric sues my daughter's hand,
I see a surer way. But thou turn'st pale—
Thou 'st ridden all too fast. Go, get some rest;
I 'll send for thee anon, and full possess thee
Of all I purpose there. 'Twill need thy counsel,
Perhaps thy helping hand.

*Ken.* My head, my hand,
My life, use them, my lord, and to the uttermost.

*Offa.* I 'll sound Edburga first, then send for thee
Ere I give answer to Beortric's mission. [*Exit* OFFA.

*Ken.* (*solus.*) Edburga weds Beortric! So farewell
My dream of Mercia's crown! Old Offa dead,
She is the elder sister. The weak Ethling,
Her brother Ecfrid, 'twere light work to push
From off the Mercian stool. But will Edburga
Wed this Beortric then? Have I not had
Her vows and virgin love—nay of her hand,
Arles in her person's privilege? That once
She loved me fondly, yea, and fiercely loved me,
Is past all question. But her slippery sex
Are like a day in March, now dog-day hot,
Now cold as mid December. For her person,
I would not shoot the lover's precipice
In fret for that—'tis now no novelty,
And she did sate me with too much. Her temper—
That is a hurricane, rageth all day,
And scarce is stilled in sleep. Pshaw! were but Kenred
Once Mercia's king, he 'd find a way to quell
The royal tigress, and transform her to
A tame domestic beast. Then Ethelburga,
She is bespoken too. Rocks everywhere,
Boding me shipwreck! Let me look them nearlier
Ere I resolve my course; though hap what may,
Whate'er the means, with heaven to help, or hell,
I will be Offa's heir, and king of Mercia! [*Exit.*

## Scene Fifth.

ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE SAME.

(*Enter* EDBURGA.)

To be deserted under plight of love,
Hath still been counted to our Saxon maids
A mortal injury! Our Saxon maids,
Alas!—pshaw! pshaw! if not a Saxon maid,
I am a Saxon woman. Scorned by him, too,
To whom alone I ever yielded up
My all of woman's soul! 'Tis true that once
I dreamed I loved another, and too lightly
Resigned that irredeemable pearl to him,
Love's costliest offering should be rendered last.
But that was lust, not love—a green girl's longing,
Born of the heat of blood. How different
What now I feel for Ethelbert! Cast off, too,
For that tame fool, that monk in petticoats,
That maudlin saint, my milk-and-water sister!
Transferred like damaged goods to the first bidder!
And shall I brook this? No; from the fate-chamber
Of my wronged woman's soul, love, pride, revenge
Thunder their oracle—he shall not wed her,
Nor live to brag, when mantling cups go round,
Unwoo'd he won, and won, cast off Edburga!
Would Kenred were returned! I wished him absent
Till I became the wife of Ethelbert—
Now, would that he were here! He loved me wildly;

And at my lightest wish—Ha! Kenred, welcome!

(*Enter* KENRED.)

I have been sieging Heaven—ay, night and day—
With prayers for thy coming.

*Ken.* Hast thou, lady?

*Ed.* 'Hast thou, lady?' Why dost thou phrase it thus
With that meek air of mockful ceremony?
Dost thou mistrust my love?

*Ken.* Mistrust thy love?—

*Ed.* Again! Thou dost not doubt it?

*Ken.* I doubt nothing,
'Tis rendered where 'tis due—

*Ed.* Where 's that?

*Ken.* To Ethelbert.

*Ed.* To Ethelbert!

*Ken.* Thou art affianced to him;
At least they tell me so—and loving hearts
Should forego linkèd hands.

*Ed.* And this from Kenred!

*Ken.* Lady, why not? Must thou not learn to hear 't
On Heaven's commandment at the holy altar?
Why not from me?

*Ed.* From thee, perfidious!—
Did I not give thee all? Hast thou not robbed me
Of all makes woman's pride?

*Ken.* I robbed thee not
Save of consented spoil. But that, assure thee,
Is dearly prized and glowingly remembered.
This young East Anglian prince thou art affianced to.
Thou lovest him, dost thou not?

*Ed.* So heartily
I would he were in heaven.
*Ken.* Thou dost not wish
That he were dead?
*Ed.* As ever thou that Welshman
Hindered King Offa's dyke.
*Ken.* Dare I believe this?
*Ed.* Try me and do the deed; and add thereby
Love's boundless owing to that 's paid already.
Kill me this Ethelbert—he 's wronged me, Kenred,
Past all atone save that.
*Ken.* How hath he wronged thee?
*Ed.* With wrong that, done unto unwedded Saxon,
Must be repaired with blood. I was his bride—
Affianced, published, owned—yet he forsook me!—
Forsook me scornfully—forsook me for
My sister Ethelburga!
*Ken.* (*aside.*) So, so—I 'm honoured!
Her cast-off lover made her instrument
To kill the lover that hath cast off her!
*Ed.* Thou 'st heard the story of Prince Rhadigis,
The Varnian prince, how he did woo to wife
A princess of East Anglia, but upon
His father's death deserted her, and wed
His stepdame, for that she was the sister
Of proud Theodebert, the Frankish king;—
How, with her brothers and a gallant fleet
Of Anglian warriors, she did cross the seas
And battled him in many a bloody field
Till he was brought her prisoner—

*Ken.* But when
The Anglian princess in her tent beheld
The fair young captive suppliant at her knee,
'Tis written in our Saxon chronicles
She did relent her rage, and take for husband
The handsome penitent. May 't not be so
With fair Edburga?

*Ed.* Help thou or hold, he dies;
He wronged me, and he dies!

*Ken.* How steads that me?
There is the King of Wessex hath sent hither,
They tell me, a love mission. He will claim
The hand that deed makes free.

*Ed.* So he be queened
With one of Offa's daughters it contents him—
He cares not which—let him wed Ethelburga.

*Ken.* (*aside.*) Ha! there 's some daylight there.

*Ed.* Lovest thou me, Kenred?

*Ken.* Not on that blessed night when thou didst yield,
Panting and trembling in thy virgin fears,
Thy beauty's banquet to my sateless sense
Did I more fondly, fiercely love Edburga.

*Ed.* Then listen my device: Thou knowest my father
Hath one proud master-wish, to build him up
This Anglo-Saxon hexarchy in one
Beneath his single sway.

*Ken.* It is his drift
I know, by night and day.

*Ed.* Egbert and Ethelbert

Are friends and brothers sworn—they 're capable—
Dost thou not guess me now?

*Ken.* In part I think,
But dimly and through mist.

*Ed.* Egbert hath claims,
Nay, right in blood, to the West-Saxon crown
Which now Beortric wears—

*Ken.* And he hath bravery
And brain to boot—

*Ed.* Spiest thou no danger there?
He, King of Wessex, with the help of Ethelbert,
They 're sworn to clip the wings of Mercia
And humble Offa's pride.

*Ken.* But 'tis not so—
Thou hast no warrant for 't?

*Ed.* Oh, quite enough
To fright ambition by. The thing is possible;
And so we dress it with some circumstance
As that Lord Egbert sues my hand in private,
Which I 'll but faint deny—

*Ken.* He doth not tho', Edburga?

*Ed.* Nay, be not jealous. Add thou but some hints
From out thy politic and practised brain,
Wherein they hive in swarms, and choleric Offa
Will even forework our will. Where shall we meet
To give our plot the cope?

*Ken.* Where last we parted;
No place so meet, so sweet.

*Ed.* Fy! fy! farewell.

[*Exit* EDBURGA.

*Ken.* (*solus.*) She loves him! But no matter; he must die:
He 's in my way, and Egbert. Then Beortric,
Wived with the younger sister, my bright hope
Is on the buoy once more. So now for facts
By show of circumstance, shall seem to credit
Edburga's tale, and make fierce Offa use me
His willing instrument in deeds wherein
He is himself my dupe and instrument. [*Exit.*

END OF ACT I.

# ACT II.

## Scene First.

TAMWORTH—THE PALACE GARDENS.

(*Enter* KENRED.)

*Ken.* That farce is done ; and wedded Ethelburga
Ere midnight crowns her bridegroom's bounding hope,
Shall be a wife, a widow, and a virgin !
Egbert is banished : so Beortric bargains,
And bargains wisely. He is dangerous ; one
In whom are rarely mixed the rarest attributes
Of our old Saxon kings, King Penda's arm
To execute King Ina's policy.
And were he in Beortric's saddle—which
Is but his rightful seat—he would achieve
What doting Offa dreams, and turn to one
Our Saxon hexarchy. No, no, not banishment,
That would but scotch thee, Egbert ! We must kill thee !
Edburga too, proud, lustful, false Edburga !
How foully hath she duped me ! She loves Ethelbert,
And being scorned, she bribes me with her body
To do her murder work ; then casts me off
To sate another lust, her curst ambition,

And be the queen of Wessex! But I 'll mate her,
And fox shall traverse fox! My game is now
The widowed Ethelburga. To that end
There needs the death of Ethelbert; and so,
Thus far to serve myself, I 'll serve Edburga.
So (*looking out*) Egbert 's come to thank her for his furlough,
That fatal furlough stays him to his death;—
I must fetch Offa to observe their meeting,
But not o'erhear their speech. [*Exit.*

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## Scene Second.

THE SAME—AN AVENUE OF TALL TREES.

(*From which enter in conversation* EGBERT *and* EDBURGA.)

*Edburga.* Beshrew me, Egbert; it is harshly done.
But why to France?
*Egbert.* For that in this our hexarchy
There's not 'gainst Mercia and Wessex joined,
Power can protect, or port dares harbour me.
*Ed.* There 's Ethelbert thy friend.
*Egb.* —Would with his life uphold me,
And at his kingdom's cost.
*Ed.* Then why to France?
*Egb.* Because I love my friend, and would not tax
His generous virtue to unnatural proof,
Against his father, and his brother-in-law,
In a so bloody and so bootless quarrel.

*Ed.* 'Tis true I have in vain appealed my father ;
Beortric hath his pledge. But when I am
Beortric's wife, methinks the king of Wessex
Will not deny his queen.

*Egb.* Lady, he will ;
Nor deem it strange he does. In Egbert's veins
The blood of Cerdic flows by th' older channel,
The lineal and the last. My crime 's my blood,
And while it flows its current carries treason
To King Beortric's crown. One prized boon
Already thou hast won for me, my banishment
Deferred, till I had seen my friend made happy.
One other boon—I crave 't on bended knee (*kneeling*),
And it shall be my last.

*Ed.* (*aside.*) Ha ! this times bravely,
An it be but observed.
What wouldst thou of me,
Speak it, Lord Egbert.

*Egb.* Lady, that thou wouldst
To my West Saxons prove a kindly mother,
Weaning thy husband with the soft appeal
Of bedded love from fratricidal wars
Of Saxon against Saxon. Then ungrudged
Of Egbert, may ye wear the crown of Wessex
And leave behind ye to inherit it.

*Ed.* I will remember it be sure, Lord Egbert.
Thou hast my promise—but,—farewell—farewell.

(*Walks away abruptly, assuming an air of disdain and anger, so as to be observed by* OFFA, *who witnesses their interview at some distance.*)

*Egb.* (*starting up and looking after her with surprise.*)
'Thou hast my promise—but, farewell—farewell!'
That woman is a mystery—a riddle
Would gravel Œdipus! In tone and terms
Her speech seemed cordial. But that look—that air
Wherewith she broke so loftily away,
As I were toad she spurned to look upon!
And yet 'twas she obtained that boon, my furlough
To be their wedding's guest. Well, well, Sir Egbert,
Woman is well too deep for thee. Her mind
Too tickle trout to catch. So counter wits
Henceforth with things have beards.
My furlough lapsed
I go to grasp the hand of Ethelbert
And bid my native land—harsh stepmother—
Adieu for evermore. [*Exit.*

(*Enter* OFFA *and* KENRED. *The former, after walking about angrily*)—

'Clip Mercia's wings,
And humble Offa's pride.' Ha! will ye, traitors?

*Ken.* Albeit the proofs were rendered me, I scarce
Could think it possible.

*Offa.* 'Tis ocular certainty.

*Ken.* So is Edburga's innocence. How scornfully
She strode away from him!

*Offa.* 'Twas well she did,
Kenred! 'twas well she did; for had she not,
She had been bundled off without reprieve
To th' Abbess Hilda, to be laid for life
A spinstress vestal in a cloister's bed.

*Ken.* (*aside.*) The devil for deemster could not rule a sentence
Would more befit, or more befret the sinner!

*Offa.* 'Clip Mercia's wings, and humble Offa's pride!'
I should have poniarded that false West Saxon
Even as he knelt to her. And, sooth to own,
My would-be son-in-law, his brother traitor,
The devil had well-nigh tempted me to poniard him
Even at the altar's foot. Thy plot 's too slow.

*Ken.* But sure, my Lord—and this doth balance that—
The death of Ethelbert will seem to the world
The deed of Egbert, and his own thereafter
But retribution on a murderer.
And these East Anglians so do hold their prince
In mere idolatry, 'twere safelier deal with them
By wit than war.

*Offa.* Then be it so; and hold thee ready, Kenred,
To company Edburga into Wessex,
My person's proxy at her court, and doer
To keep all quiet there; while I meantime,
Seize on East Anglia in her sister's right,
The widow-queen and heir of Ethelbert.
Then, Kenred! then—

*Ken.* Ay, then, my Lord! one spring, one forward spring,
This monster-beast, our Saxon hexarchy,
His superfluity of head and horn
Shall turn to unicorn, and Offa reign
Our isle's Bretwalda, one and absolute!

*Offa.* Look, who come there?

*Ken.* I think the new-wed lovers,
And he who coupled them, the Abbot Wynhelm.
*Offa.* Then let 's away. I cannot dress a countenance
Dissembles for the nonce. Leave them to coo
Unbarred their cooing time—our plot is perfect
Shall baulk their kissing time. [*Exeunt.*

(*Enter* ETHELBERT *and* ETHELBURGA, *accompanied by* WYNHELM.)

*Wynh.* Good-night, my children !
*Ethelburga.* Nay, not yet—so soon—
Good Wynhelm, 'tis not late.
*Wynh.* At the yond limit
Of this long leafy arch, see where the moon
Creeps silver-checkering the tall tree-tops !
I must to roost—for ere the lark 's astir,
Morning must find me on my homeward way.
*Ethelburga.* Hast thou belief in dreams ?
*Ethelbert.* Nay, Ethelburga,
Forget that idle dream.
*Ethelburga.* I cannot, Ethelbert,
For it regarded thee. Good Wynhelm, tell me,
Dost thou believe in dreams ?
*Wynh.* In sooth, my daughter,
I am reputed of my reverend brothers
To lean there somewhat to the heretic.
If thou didst dream last night—
*Ethelburga.* Oh, such a dream !
*Wynh.* I 'll read it thee unfee'd. The ritual
Of this expected day had set thy spirits

Upon the flutter, and thy body's fever
Did dream-disease thy sleep. Think on 't, dear Ethelburga,
As of thy tooth's ache, or thy temples' throbbing,
When thou art well again. Dare man to prophesy,
Thy dole will be a happy. Be it otherwise,
Bethink thee of thy promise, and betake thee
To Guthlac's hallowed isle, a sanctuary
Which even the forest outlaw shrinks to violate.
Farewell—
Heaven bless you both, my children ! and so love you
As doth old Wynhelm. [*Exit* WYNHELM.

*Ethelbert.* Kindly, good old man !
How largely hast thou made our hearts thy debtor.
Blest be the day I trod thy lonely isle !
The night I slept beneath thy friendly roof !
The dearer morn that followed it ! Oh, Ethelburga,
When from that casement, for an hour seemed shrunk
Into a minute, I did gaze on thee
By that still lake, till form, look, lineament,
In my soul's tablature took print for ever,
How little deemed I thou shouldst be mine own
So soon—mine own for ever ! Nay, fy on thee !
Why weepest thou ? Doth that makes me so blest
Make thee unhappy ?

*Ethelburga.* Tell me, Ethelbert,
Hast thou ne'er known, when some spring-tide of bliss
Had swelled thy bosom to the overflow,
A dim fore-feeling of some coming evil,
Dark, undefined, come o'er thee suddenly,
And turn thy joy-spring into fearfulness ?

*Ethelbert.* Perchance I have—what then? 'Twas nothing save
My megrim's moodiness. That foolish dream
Disturbs thee still.

*Ethelburga.* What dost thou think of Kenred?

*Ethelbert.* 'Tis oddly questioned—and in verity
I am not full prepared to answer thee.
Thy father counts him the most politic
And capable of all his Mercian lords.
My knowledge is too new, or I should write him
An over-politic.

*Ethelburga.* He loves thee not,
I fear me, Ethelbert.

*Ethelbert.* He might have spared then
Some speeches seasoned with superfluous honey.
What matters it? So Ethelburga love him,
What's Kenred's hate or Kenred's love to Ethelbert?

*Ethelburga.* My sister too. Hast thou observed o' late
Nothing seems strange in her? Oh, Ethelbert,
Would we were far from hence!

*Ethelbert.* And so we shall,
My Ethelburga, ere to-morrow's sun
Dips his tired forehead in the western wave.—
Were Kenred and Edburga in thy dream?

*Ethelburga.* The foremost actors and most terrible.
And when this day i' th' holy place I glanced
A stolen look at them, oh, Ethelbert,
A deathly faintness came that instant o'er me;
Their eyes exchanged a meaning so mysterious,

That dream in all its horrid realty
Rose to my very sense !

*Ethelbert.* Nay, Ethelburga,
It is not well to cloud thy bridal day
With these black shadows raised by phantasy
In sleep's unreal sky. Mark where the moon,
Now full uprisen without cloud, shines o'er
Thy home to be—the fair East Anglian realm.
So shall it be with thee. Fair as herself,
Thy course shall be in as unclouded sky,
As worshipped and as peerless 'mid the stars
Shall gem thy firmament. Nor shalt thou need
To sigh for Croyland. Near our palace-home
Spreads a fair forest, in whose bosom sleeps
A lone and lovely lake, cradling an islet
Rugged and rude, a woody wilderness
Needs but the taming hand of man to turn
Into a paradise. There shall we build us
A little Croyland of our own, with terraces,
Mazy wood-walks, and mimic hermitage
Caged on some wild cliff's ledge. And we will walk
By loving moonlight by that lone lake's side ;
And tho' I cannot, like good Abbot Wynhelm,
Enrich thy hearing with the treasured lore
Of many an age gone by, love's soft caress
Oft interposed will mend my learning's lack,
And eik a lover's lame philosophy.
Wilt thou not there be happy ?

*Ethelburga.* Anywhere, everywhere,
Dear Ethelbert, with thee !

*Ethelbert.* Sweet, to thy chamber!
The night wears late; thy maidens wait for thee;
They 've decked thy bridal bed.
*Ethelburga.* Nay, nay—not yet.
It is a lovely eve.
*Ethelbert.* The chill night-dews
Bear down the beaded grass. For thy health's safety,
Pray thee within. I go to say farewell
To my poor banished friend, then fly to thee
On love's impatient wing. Sweet, to thy chamber,
Thy bridegroom lover will not tarry long
To claim a husband's place.

[*Exeunt:* ETHELBERT *leading her off.*

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## Scene Third.

THE PALACE OF OFFA.

(*Enter* KENRED *in conversation with* MARWULF, *a groom.*)

*Kenred.* And soon as ye have passed the gate, good Marwulf,
Get thee to instant speed, as 'twere on flight;
And if he question why, say 'twas commanded thee—
Yet be 't such speed as may not baffle following.
And when we 've overtaken you and charged
Lord Egbert with the deed, as moved by passion
Hold thee prepared to smite him instantly,
And be it sure, good Marwulf, as 'tis sudden—
Remember thy reward.

*Marwulf.* My lord, I 'll earn it.

[*Exit* MARWULF.

*Ken.* (*solus.*) Egbert and Ethelbert are now together—
It chances to a wish—for our plot hinges
On timing nicely the co-accidents.
With beating heart the bride hath sought her chamber,
Whence she will issue with how altered cheer
A widow and a maid!
I saw her as she passed—how fair she looked!
The holy crimson on her conscious cheek
As I did gaze on her. One qualm of pity
Shot o'er me momently for th' bridegroom baulked
Of banquet fit for gods, until the thought
This all untasted sweetness was reserved
To feast my happy self, unwomaned me,
And turned remorse to rapture! Let Beortric
Enjoy the rind where I have sucked the juice,
While I with unslaked appetite ascend
A sweeter, fairer, and more fruitful tree! [*Exit.*

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## Scene Fourth.

ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE SAME.

(*Enter in conversation* EGBERT *and* ETHELBERT.)

*Egbert.* Nay, spare thy rhetoric: for grant Northumbria—
A doubtful hope—did club his strength with thine,
What were ye both against the banded might
Of Mercia and of Wessex? To embroil thee

In bootless issue, with the father too
Of that fair angel thou dost bed to-night!
Fy, fy! I were not man to suffer it—
'Twere selfishness might shame the very devil!

*Ethelbert.* Must I then brook to see my dearest friend,
In whose proud veins the blood of royal Cerdic
Flows unadulterate, undegenerate,
Unjudged, uncharged, robbed of his rightful throne,
Hunted like outlaw forth his fatherland
To find a home from chance or charity!

*Egb.* Say rather like his great forefather Cerdic,
With his good sword to win him other home,
A wider kingdom, and a fairer crown,
In lands whose beauty your proud British sea
Hath never mirrored to—

*Ethelbert.* How meanest thou—
Where goest thou?

*Egb.* To fight the Saracen
With Pepin's glorious son.

*Ethelbert.* So mix the threads
Our motley life is spun of—dark and bright,
Gladness and grief, the gayest and the saddest
Blent in the one strange woof. The happy night
That crowns my love, bereaves me of my friend,
Robs me of Egbert, yields me Ethelburga!

*Egb.* Heaven sorteth all; and what is good, what evil,
'Tis but the end unriddles. I go to wrestle
With fortune, a rough mistress—thou, my friend,
To softer wrestling and a kinder mistress—

Be each propitious to her wooer's suit,
So, Ethelbert, farewell!
*Ethelbert.* May heaven go with thee,
Honoured and injured friend! and send occasion
When thou and I on some fair battle-field
May yet confront thine enemies and confound them.

[*Exeunt.*

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## Scene Fifth.

A PASSAGE IN THE SAME.

(*Enter* EGBERT, *after parting with* ETHELBERT.)

*Egbert.* Plague on that dagger!—'twas my favourite too—
And at the time my need doth most demand it—
Stolen for a keepsake maybe. Then I 'll swear me
It was not Kenred nor King Offa stole it!

(*Enter* MARWULF.)

*Marwulf.* Our steeds stand ready, good my lord, and 'tis
Nicely upon our time.
*Egb.* 'Tis well, my friend,
For I am ready too. [*Exit* MARWULF.
What do they yonder
These birds of evil omen, Kenred and Edburga?
Like guilty things they slunk at my approach—
Startled away. They cannot purpose ill to them—
And yet methinks they never met for good!
Farewell to Mercia, and to fair Sax-Angland!
I have no country now—and but one friend;

But he is happy. To thy venture, then,
Egbert! it lies uphill: but a stout heart
And merry will, with time and travail,
And Heaven to help, surmount the starkest steep! [*Exit.*

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## Scene Sixth.

A CORRIDOR OR GALLERY, WITH PILLARS AND RECESSES.

(*At the farther extremity is the chamber of* ETHELBURGA, *from which* EDBURGA *comes forth. Enter* KENRED, *meeting her.*)

*Kenred.* Away, away, Edburga! All is ready,
And none must spy thee here.
*Edburga.* Thou hast that dagger I secured for thee—
The dagger Egbert wore? So, so—thou hast it.
Be sure thou leave it in the traitor's heart
Sheathed to the hilt, or if thou draw it forth
Drop it upon the floor—
*Ken.* Away! away!
Thy teaching needs not, but thine absence doth.
(*Exit* EDBURGA—KENRED *retiring behind one of the pillars. Enter* ETHELBERT.)
*Ethelbert.* Poor Egbert! happy Ethelbert! so sways
The wavering beam our destiny doth hook on!
Over this breathing ball one hour looks down
On sights how strangely different! Here, it listens
The first faint cry of life; there, hears its last
Sighed feebly forth, or shrieked in agony!

Here, marks the flush on glory's front, elate
O'er some proud task achieved; there, life-sick shame
Praying that heaven's own arch might fall and cover it!
Here, clamorous ecstasy; there, dumb despair;
Here, youths and virgins to the viol's call,
Bounding at pleasure's shrine; there, the pale widow
Watching a corse, her son's, her only child's!
On birth, on death, on good deeds and on evil,
On bliss, on woe, o'er this thronged ant-hill, earth,
Now looks yon midnight moon that comes forth heralding
How different fortunes to my friend and me!
Exile to Egbert, bliss to Ethelbert,
And paradise in Ethelburga's arms!

(*Rushes towards the bridal chamber; while in the act of opening it,* KENRED, *stealing from his hiding-place, stabs him repeatedly from behind.*)

*Ken.* Here's the steel bridge doth avenue paradise—
It must be traversed first.

*Ethelbert.* O treacherous villain!

(*Falls dead.*)

*Ken.* (*throwing down* EGBERT's *dagger by the side of* ETHELBERT)—
There—lie thou there, thou dumb but damning perjury,
Against thine absent lord.

[*Exit hastily. The scene falls, and immediately after a loud and piercing woman's shriek is heard from within.*

END OF ACT II.

# ACT III.

## Scene First.

THE CAPITAL OF WESSEX.

(*Enter* ALRED, ETHELMUND, *and other two Lords.*)

1 *Lord.* It is not possible! We would not credit it—
Banished from Wessex, Alred?

*Alred.* Bag and baggage,
For ever and a day.

2 *Lord.* Nay, ye but jest with us.

*Ethelmund.* Would Queen Edburga did but jest with us!

1 *Lord.* 'Tis Queen Edburga's act, then?

*Ethelm.* What is not,
Is done in Wessex now?

2 *Lord.* What is, indeed!
We 've had foul weather since this Mercian magpie
Lighted on Wessex.

*Alred.* Ye 'll have fouler yet,
Or I misprophesy. 'Tis that contents us
To quit our fathers' land.

1 *Lord.* Ye are not banished
Beyond the sea?

*Alred.* In fact, but not in phrase.
We dare not pass to Mercia, for Offa,
Her father kings it there ; nor to East Anglia,
There he usurps it ; to Northumbria, "
The king 's his son-in-law ; to Kent or Essex,
They are his tributaries. Hamlet or hall,
There 's not within the hexarchy can offer us
Safety or sanctuary.
2 *Lord.* I need not ask,
What is your crime ? but, what 's your category ?
Of what are you impeached ?
*Alred.* Of nought in special,
Of much in general. We 're dangerous ;
Our speech doth smack of the seditious ;
We 're malcontents,
Consort with those are known for evil-wishers
To the king and queen ; we breed dispeace, and so forth.
*Ethelm.* Which being rendered into Saxon means
That we are dangerous to a certain dame
Would don her husband's boots ; that we speak out
Touching her father's act, in that he murdered
His son-in-law, Prince Ethelbert, then seized
On his inheritance, and marvel us
At King Beortric's tameness, who looked on,
And saw the robbery done —there 's our sedition !
Then for our company ; they 're but unfriends
To King Edburga and to Queen Beortric.
And sith we cannot shut our eyes, nor wink
At what we seeing see, nor sever names
From things, nor things from names, in our blunt Saxon,

We 're malcontents—we breed dispeace—and so on!
So runs our charge, and we plead guilty to 't.
1 *Lord.* And so do I, an these be crimes of state.
2 *Lord.* And I; and every honest man in Wessex.
And must ye then in this, wherein we all
Do co-offend with you, be hunted forth
Like confessed murderers, attainted, banished,
Because, forsooth, Beortric's royal dame,
Will sit her husband's saddle!
*Ethelm.* Hush!—beseech ye,
That 's rank high-treason.
2 *Lord.* An it be, I care not.
It is God's truth.
1 *Lord.* Your ban 's not booked, is it?
Not past revoke? Have ye appealed the king?
*Ethelm.* What boots it? Our friend Worr would have it so,
And nill we, will we, he hath gone to him.
But so the lady wills the other way—
And she hath willed—what boots it?
*Alred.* And ere I
Would crook my knee to crave a boon from her,
For incense I had sooner burn me brimstone,
And supplicate the devil.
1 *Lord.* From their boyhood
The king and Worr have been as very brothers;
He 'll grant his prayer.
*Alred.* So be his lady-lord
Will yield him leave.
*Ethelm.* And say that Worr succeed,
As he will not, till we have placed betwixt us

The salty fosse of ocean in defence,
We are not safe. This Mercian hath a way
To compass her self ends, yet garb her in
The seeming of obedience. Ye know well
What chanced so lately to the noble Ethbald,
When he in open council made protest
Against King Offa's seizure of East Anglia,
In mockery of right. The Mercian she-fox,
Fearing his counsels might incline Beortric
To hear East Anglia's groans—ye know what followed.

1 *Lord.* What followed, Ethelmund? We only know—

*Ethelm.* That Ethbald supped one evening with the queen,
And never supped again.

2 *Lord.* Was it not true then,
He sickened i' the night of sudden illness,
And died ere morn?

*Ethelm.* —Of the queen's hospitality!

1 *Lord.* Not poisoned, Ethelmund?

*Ethelm.* As surely poisoned
As e'er was ban-dog barked his honest outcry
Against the midnight thief. Is it not safer
Beyond the seas, than supping with Edburga?—
But here comes Worr. What speed there needs no asking,

(*Enter* WORR, *who walks about angrily without speaking.*)

For all may read it written in his face,
And in a good round hand.

*Worr.* A good round oath—
Curse on that Mercian harlot!

*Ethelm.* Harlot, Worr!
It is a naughty name.

*Worr.* It fits the better,
For name and nature jump. Lords, whither go ye?
I 'm of your company.

*Alred.* What! gotten too
Thy part in peace? Thou art not banished, art thou?

*Worr.* No, Alred; but, 'fore Heaven, I 'd liefer dwell
With the wild Irish, burrowing under ground,
With a brock's hole for bigging; or tend sheep
On the bleak topmost of Albanian hills,
And call me a Pict master; lower still:
I 'd serf it sooner to a Pagan Druid,
And feed on acorns in the British woods,
Than live in lands where women grow to men,
And men to women; where, upturning nature,
Under is uppermost, and beards but serve,
Like tufts in tame he-goats, to lead thereby!

*Ethelm.* Ho! Worr; what 's pitched thee on this thunder-key?

*Worr.* Would ye believe it, friends? I knelt to her!
Ay, in the presence of her paramour,
The Mercian Kenred, I abased me so,
I knelt to her! And when I 'meaned my speech
To a slave's humbleness, she deigned not answer,
But, seizing proudly on her minion's arm,
She stalked away and left me on my knees!

*Ethelm.* We grieve for our poor sakes thou shouldst have brooked
So foul indignity. But why not rather
Appealed thee to a gentler judge, thy friend
The King Beortric?

*Worr.* It was King Beortric
Sent me to her. Oh! she hath bewitched him
With harlot arts or damned pharmacy!
He is so boyish fond, so tame obsequious,
He may not speak, nor think, nor eat, nor sleep,
Nor aught but as his sorceress,
This new Morgana so hath sotted him
With amorous drinks and spells and sorceries.
Doth puppet-lead him by her girdle-strings!—
Where go ye, lords?

*Ethelm.* To join our countryman,
The noble Egbert, now so high renowned
Among the captains of great Pepin's son,
Imperial Charles. He 'll find us work to do
Against the Huns, the Dacians, or the Saracens—
And we 'll not shame, we flatter us, the paddock
That we were pastured in. Our Saxon schooling,
Albeit shallow, to the unschooled Franks
Will show as wonderful. Oh, we shall thrive;
Fear not for us.

*Worr.* By heaven! I 'll go with you;
This is a cursed land.

*Ethelm.* We quit our country
Because we must. Thy post is here.

*Worr.* Here, Ethelmund!
To see Beortric veil his craven crest,
If his dame-hen but ruffle her neck-feathers!
To see his sceptre and his sheets dishonoured
By this vile Mercian!—to see the ruin

Of my doomed country working day by day
Before his witchèd eyes!

*Ethelm.* Abide thou here
And lend him thine—they are uncharmed. Thou 'rt game
Edburga dares not hawk at—the king's friend.
We do adjure thee by our love for Wessex,
To th' which, tho' exiled, we will cling in hope
As our sole country, and our proper home,
Do not abandon her—beseech thee, Worr,
Forsake not Wessex in her evil hour!

*Worr.* Ye have persuaded me—I will remain;
It is the braver part. And if I fail
I 'll think that Wessex where her lovers home—
And cross the sea to join your fellowship. [*Exeunt.*

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## Scene Second.

THE PALACE.

(*Enter* EDBURGA *and* KENRED.)

*Kenred.* What 's moved thee so? Thou art disturbed, Edburga.

*Edburga.* There is no safety while that villain lives, Kenred! for thee or me.

*Ken.* What villain?

*Edb.* Worr.

*Ken.* It was my very thought. Yet sure to thee He dares not hint.

*Edb.* Hint what?

*Ken.* Our loves.

*Edb.* Our loves !

*Ken.* Guesswork or knowledge, he hath found them out.

*Edb.* Ha ! dared he then—?

*Ken.* In phrase direct he dared not,
Nor dared I understand—yet was 't a speech
Demands no Daniel to unriddle it.

*Edb.* It doth but spur a purpose into act ;
I had resolved his death. While Ethbald lived
He shunned to meddle with affairs of state—
Beortric's friend, but not his counsellor.
But ever since, as some state-devil possessed him,
He 'll walk in Ethbald's shoes—puts on the counsellor,
Abeys the friend and plays the patriot.
We thought our fears had gone to sleep with Ethbald ;
He 's come alive in Worr, and in a shape
Doubles our danger. Ethbald was but honoured
As a shrewd counsellor, but Worr is loved
As a twin-brother. And Beortric's nature
Is soft and loving.

*Ken.* And, as be such natures,
Sudden to starts of frantic jealousy,
Will slake its heat with blood. Should but his friend,
To sway Beortric to a purpose, hint—

*Edb.* Ay, should he, Kenred ! It must be forefended,
And we must make the opportunity,
Not wait for it. It was this villain Worr
Fretted me so even now. He had seduced
Beortric's softness to a milky mood,
Touching our enemies the banished lords
Alred and Ethelmund. After a thunder-storm

Followed by rain, then sunshine, first a sulking,
And then a kissing scene, with much ado
I have o'erruled his purpose for the time:—
But he so harps on dangerous fantasies—
East Anglia, Egbert, Ethelbert—it keeps me
Ever upon the fret and fear. This night
His evil prompter dies. There must no dallying.
That damned secret like a thunder-cloud
May in a moment burst on us and blast us.
It is Beortric's birth-day. To our banquet
None shall be bidden, save thyself and Worr.
I have a minister—

*Ken.* The medicined wine
Gave Ethbald his long sleep—

*Edb.* It works not over sudden,
My cordial. But to time it perfectly,
Needs preparation and nice alchemy,
Thou 'lt find me in my closet. [*Exit* EDBURGA.

*Ken.* (*solus.*) So far is well. But there's she knows not of,
More home concerns us both; my news from Mercia—
Offa is dying—body and spirit sick,
Haunted by devils in droves, old Croyland's abbot
Cannot psalm-sing away—endowing monasteries
And vowing more. It takes me on the unready—
He dies too soon.
As for the poor boy Ecfrid,
To push him off his stool were easy done,
So I ascended in his sister's slippers,
But that way there 's no hope. They 're married—all,
Save Ethelburga, and she 's worse than married,

Wedded to Holy Church, vowed to virginity
In Croyland abbey, whence by th' secular arm
There 's no unearthing her! And then her spouse,
He 's not of bone and blood, and so removeable
By edge of steel or drugged electuary,
As is Edburga's. Ha! (*musing*)—as is Edburga's.
Were 't not a master-stroke, her fond Beortric,
Should i' the deathcup pledge his minion Worr,
And travel with him to the land of ghosts!
His widow for my wife—Wessex in hand,
Mercia in fee! In thine elaboratory,
Thou 'rt brewing, lady, that thou wott'st not of—
My grand elixir shall redress me all,—
Makes me thy master, body, soul, estate;—
Then what thy father thought, Kenred shall do.
In the first Kenred ends the hexarchy!
Well speed thy work, my fair apothecary! [*Exit.*

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## Scene Third.

THE SAME—ANOTHER APARTMENT.

(*Enter* KING BEORTRIC *and* WORR.)

*Beortric.* This terrible Offa rides thee like the night-mare!
Leeches have ruled a wise man may be mad
Upon a single fancy. This is thine!

*Worr.* When King Beortric was the lord Beortric,
He judged not so—he did not think this madness.

*Beort.* The lord Beortric was not Offa's son,
Makes that no difference?

*Worr.* Alas! it does.
It blinds Beortric, but it binds not Offa.

*Beort.* Would he disqueen his daughter? Or would she,
So loving and so loved, unking her husband?
Would one so fond, so fair—

*Worr.* Yet one as fair
Befooled as fond a lord.

*Beort.* And who was she?

*Worr.* The fair Philistian. When the giant Jew
Laid his fool's head upon her harlot lap
In sensual slumber—thou hast read his story—
How he arose therefrom, leaving behind him
His strength and glory in a strumpet's apron.

*Beort.* Now out upon thy foul comparison,
Likens my queen to that sheep-shearing Philistine!
Thou flatterest not thy king.

*Worr.* I am his friend
Too much for that.

*Beort.* Well, well, come to our banquet;
It is my birth-day. I 'll not tell my Delilah
Of thy misloyal similie. Ye must
Be friends. I would not have at variance
The two whom most I love. Edburga frets
Her husband's friend for chief familiars
Should choose her father's chiefest enemies,
Alred and Ethelmund.

*Worr.* They do not relish
Her father's doings in East Anglia.

*Beort.* Nor will I justify. Methinks she scans
That act too gently with a daughter's eye.
Thou know 'st thereon I did remonstrate with him.

*Worr.* Ay, so thou didst. Thou didst remonstrate with him!
I know thou didst. Even when thou saw'st fast clutched
Within his robber's hand thy neighbour's purse,
Thou didst remonstrate! Hadst thou griped him by
His robber's throat instead, and wrenched perforce
Th' unrighteous spoil from his perfidious grasp,
There were brave retribution! But instead,
Thou didst remonstrate in fair terms, and he
Rejoined in fairer; sent thee a phrase-monger,
That oily Mercian, whose sweet speeches, sped
With sweeter kisses from Edburga's lips,
Glued thy tame sword within its charmèd scabbard,
Sealed thy shut ear to poor East Anglia's groans,
And when thine honest counsellors, Lord Ethbald,
Alred, and Ethelmund, like men and Saxons
Cried shame thereat, it was not then remonstrance,
But death and banishment.

*Beort.* But death and banishment!
Thy passion mads thee. Did I kill Lord Ethbald?
His death was Heaven's own act. And for the others,
They were too bold of speech.

*Worr.* For they were honest.
I loved the lord Beortric as a friend,
And loved him worthily, for that I knew him
Honest as noble. But if King Beortric
Will not bear honesty; if honest speech

Be barred his royal court, I 'll rather hence
The love I bear him bear to other lands,
Self-banished with my friends, than tarry here
To wear a Turk's tongue 'twixt my Saxon teeth.

*Beort.* Nay, Worr, methinks thou 'st given thy Saxon tongue
A Saxon's license to the full, and dealt
Less than the just and far less than the loyal,
To thy poor friend and king. I think with thee,
Though these two lords did rudely overstretch
Their privilege of speech, that they are honest ;
And in that faith had seen right well content
Their punishment remitted.

*Worr.* Needs there more ?
Is King Beortric not the King of Wessex ?

*Beort.* The Queen is much offended, so is Kenred,
Upon his King's account. But come to-night,
Edburga would be reconciled with thee.
She prays thy presence at our evening banquet—
Thou 'lt not deny the Queen?

*Worr.* 'Twas not the Queen
Desired my presence, was it ?

*Beort.* She prays it earnestly.

*Worr.* A grateful guest,
I 'll come, my lord, so for my banished friends
Thou 'lt speed my humble suit.

*Beort.* I promise it.
She 'll not deny it for my birth-day's boon.

[*Exit* BEORTRIC.

*Worr* (*solus*). Ah, poor Beortric ! Yet I love thee still,

Albeit thy faults, thy feebleness of purpose
And tame uxoriousness. Were but thy heart
The ever steersman of thy will, thou wert
A king indeed! Thou 'rt worth the rescuing.
And but my wit stand second to my will,
I will defend thee from thy devil queen :—
And for thy sake and theirs, my banished friends,
I 'll smooth my forehead to this Mercian harlot,
And say, Hail fellow! to her paramour. [*Exit.*

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## Scene Fourth.

THE SAME—A CLOSET ADJOINING THE BANQUET-ROOM.

(*On a table four massive Goblets are placed. Enter* EDBURGA *and* KENRED.)

*Edburga.* Old custom rules it that the parting cup
Be spiced, of rarest wine. That is the King's ;
And this the Queen's, in antique imagery,
Each carved of massive gold. The other two
Of silver quaintly sculptured, for the guests
The King delights to honour.

*Kenred.* They 're so like
They may be changed.

*Edb.* Thou dost not know old Beerwulf
Chief butler to the king, and king of butlers ;
High Priest of forms, Lord Paragon of punctilio :—
Matchless in mangling speech, or mingling cordials ;
He 's so mere pedant in his ceremonials

He 'd run march-mad stood but one cup awry
A pin's-point out of place ! Thou art the stranger,
The representative of Mercia's royalty :—
Thy cup is next to mine. Hast thou that phial ?
I pray thee hand it me. This is Worr's cup.

(*Pours a few drops of the liquid into* WORR'S *cup, then returns the phial to* KENRED.)

So, so, it is enough ; we must not overdose,
Else will it work too soon. And now in sunshine
Dress we our looks to this West Saxon hornet.
He 's stingless now, and it will please Beortric.
It nears our banquet's hour, and 'twere not well
We were seen here.

(*Exeunt ; but soon after* KENRED *re-enters cautiously with the open phial in his hand, and pours some of the liquid into the* KING'S *cup.*)

*Ken.* The double horn
Of power and shame, methinks Sir King and Cuckold,
Will bring thy brow the headache. Here 's will physic it.
Mixed by a loving hand. We must not over-dose,
My fair mediciner ? Methinks the danger
Is all the other way. To under-dose,
That were worse still. Our julep might not work,
Or work so tenderly it left the patient
Leisure and lungs to blab. So take thou this—

(*Lifting* WORR'S *cup from the table, and pouring more of the liquid into it.*)

To sober thee, my hot-brained Saxon lord !
After this grace-cup thou wilt play no more

The prating patriot or the eavesdropper
Upon my chamber sports. Ha! footsteps coming!

(*In his confusion he lays down the cup, not where it stood before, but alongside the other silver cup, and exit hastily. Enter from the other side* BEERWULF *and three assistants.*)

*Beerwulf.* Come, bustle, rascals. Bustle—bustle—bustle!
We shall be called anon. Holla! what's here?

(*Observing the cups disarranged.*)

Burglary—blasphemy—felony—treason—
In the King's pantry too, my sanctimorum!
Ye must be tasting of the royal night-cup,
Must ye, ye knaves? Ye sortilegious villains!
Will nothing less content ye than hob-nobbing
Out of the King's own cup? Ye will be hanged for't;
'Tis simony in law, and celibacy,
Larceny, perjury, irony, arson;
Ye will be whipped within high-water mark,
Beheaded at the cart's tail; and then set
I' the pillory without benefit of clergy;
The Crowner will make Deodands o' ye,
Rascals, he will.

1 *Assist.* Nay but, good Master Beerwulf,
'Tis not the royal cup: 'tis but the guests'.

*Beer.* 'Tis all the same, rascal; 'tis all the same
In Crowner's law.
Come now, dishonest knaves,
Confess me honestly and like true men,
Who did this felony?

*Assists.* Not I.—Nor I.—Nor I.

*Beer.* Will ye deny it, knaves—will ye? When I
Had sipped—as every honest butler will—
And spiced, and spiced, and sipped them one by one,
Did I not place them so?

(*In re-arranging the two cups he transposes their original position, placing first the drugged one, that designed for* WORR.)

Here the Lord Kenred's,
Ambassador and pontiff-penitentiary
Of the most high and mighty and unanimous prince,
Offa of Mercia and East Anglia—

2 *Assist.* Nay,
Not of East Anglia—

*Beer.* Peace, infidel!
And of East Anglia, king. Last, the Lord Worr's.

2 *Assist.* And why should he be last, good Master Beerwulf?
He 's a West Saxon, and a better man,
I warrant me, than e'er a Mercian o' them.

*Beer.* Peace, rascal! wouldst thou lesson me, me, Beerwulf,
In high affairs of state, the diplomatics
And ceremonial law? me, Beerwulf,
The King's head butler, who have been head butler
To five West Saxon kings successfully?
Kings be not so long-lived as butlers—why?
Answer me that, rascals.

3 *Assist.* Mayhap it be,
Good Master Beerwulf, because the king
Bears not his cellar's keys.

*Beer.* Humph ! Ruddigund,
How thinkest thou ?

1 *Assist.* Butlers, I guess, be not
So worth the killing. Bull-frogs be not hunted "
Like bucks or boars, nor bats like partridges.

*Beer.* 'Tis answered like a fool. Thou art no scholar,
No hieroglyphic, nor hermaphrodite ;
Thou canst not read the stars by alchemy,
Nor cast nativities. I warrant me,
Thou never saw'st a ghost.

1 *Assist.* Hast thou, good Beerwulf ?

*Beer.* And goblins too, and black-a-moors besides,
Witches and fetches, fairies and Jack-o'-lanterns,
And other sights most devilish and invisible.
And do ye think me so incredible
As to believe me that this yonder cup,
Which is a thing incarnate, and no Christian,
Nor hath no legs to will or wander by,
Should sidle him from his place and cheek-by-jowl it
To gossip like a Christian with his neighbour,
As though St. Vitus' self, who taught the Pope
To dance, and thereupon was canonaded
And made a satyr of—

2 *Assist.* Nay, Master Beerwulf,
A martyr, was it not ?

*Beer.* 'Tis all the same, fool ;
The Pope can make them both, so they observe
All fasts and feasts, and do to superfluity
Apocryphal good works. But stir ye, rascals !
We shall be called anon. [*Exeunt.*

## Scene Fifth.

THE BANQUET-ROOM.

(*The* KING, QUEEN, KENRED, *and* WORR *seated at table.*)

*Beortric.* Is it so late?

*Edburga.* It is indeed, my lord.

*Beort.* How swiftly steals the soundless tread of time
O'er happy hearts and hours! I ne'er had guessed me
It neared so late an hour. 'Kings have no friends,'
So rules the proverb. 'Tis a cruel one
If it be false: a sad, if it be true.
And that 'tis true, I 'll not believe, nor can I,
While I am circled thus. Dearest Edburga,
Hath not our banquet proved a pleasant one?

*Edb.* On a so fair occasion, dear my lord,
How could it otherwise?

*Beort.* And guested thus
By friendship and by love.

*Edb.* Yet must our happiest,
Even like our dullest days, come to a closing.
Sleep is a tyrant needs will have his due
From queen or queen, from cobler or from king,
On feast-day and on fast. Mine eyes wax heavy;
I must to bed or I shall yawn outright,
Which were high treason at the royal table,
And on the royal birthday.

*Beort.* Go, sweet traitress!
Get thee to bed then.

*Edb.* What! without my night-cup?
Is that my treason's forfeit?

*Beort.* Ho! good Beerwulf!

[*Enter* BEERWULF.

Hast spiced the Queen's night-cup?

*Beer.* Ay, my lord,
I 've spiced them all, fit cordials for the gods,
For Juniper and Juno.

*All.* Ha! ha! ha!

*Edb.* Then fetch them all, good Beerwulf. Ye 'll pledge me—
Unless, perchance, ye would carouse more freely
When I have rid you of a lady's spying.

*Kenred.* Nay, my Lord Worr, methinks we 've had enough—
Shall we not pledge the Queen?

*Worr.* With all my heart.

*Beort.* Then fetch them all, good Beerwulf.

(BEERWULF *brings in the cups one by one, placing them severally and successively before the* KING, *the* QUEEN, KENRED, *and* WORR.)

Methinks
Never did happier birthday close on king
Than doth this day on me.

*Edb.* (*standing up, as do* KENRED *and* WORR, *who repeat the prayer after her, and then drain their cups.*)—
Health to the King!
And ne'er less happy birthday close on him
Than doth this happy one!

*Beort.* Dearest Edburga!

Never did parting cup 'twixt truer hearts
Pledge warmer love than this. Health to you all!

(*Drinks.*)

*Edb.* (*rises and is going.*) And fair good night!

*Worr.* I have one poor request,
Most noble lady! ere thou go.

*Beort.* Ay, Worr,
'Tis well remembered. On so happy night
My fair Edburga will not say thee nay,
When I entreat it as my birthday boon.

*Edb.* Nay, good my lord, mine eyes do grow so heavy,
I 'd yawn perforce, even in the listening to 't,
Which were mere rudeness. Pardon me to-night,
I pray thee, good my lord. And, noble Worr,
So thou not count it labour to attend me
To-morrow's noon, thou mayest go sleep to-night,
And dream whate'er thou wilt, in prophecy
Assured, so thy dream's augury be good
I will not false its promise. So good night
My lord's friend and mine own. To-morrow come,
And sleep thee sound the while. Good night! good night! [*Exit* EDBURGA.

*Beort.* Nay, look not vexed, dear Worr. To-night assure thee,
My fair bed-fellow hath not leave to sleep
Till she hath promised me. To-morrow trust me
Thy suit is granted.

*Worr.* It had pleased me better
Had it been so to-night.

(KENRED *appears to sit very uneasily on his seat.*)

*Beort.* Nay, sleep surprised her—
And ya ! (*yawns*) methinks she hath infected me,
I feel much drowsy too.

(*Yawns repeatedly, as does* KENRED.)

And see ! Lord Kenred
Is half asleep already. 'Tis most strange !
We drank but sparingly ; and yet my brain—
The banquet-hall doth seem to dance all round me.

*Ken.* (*as speaking to himself.*) Oh, the fell she-fox ! But is 't possible ?

*Beort.* What dost thou mutter, Kenred? Art thou ill too?
Thou sitt'st unsteadily ; or is 't my brain
Sees all things on the reel ?

*Ken.* Feels the Lord Worr
Nothing of this ?

*Worr.* I do not. But thy looks
Change o' the sudden to a ghastly wildness—
Thou 'rt much unwell. And, gracious Heaven ! the king—

(*Supporting him.*)

My lord ! Beortric ! dearest friend ! what 's this ?
'Tis not the natural drowsiness of sleep,
Nor could our moderate draughts—

*Ken.* The sorceress fiend !
That cup—that damnèd cup !

*Worr.* Thou wouldst not say ?—

*Ken.* That we are dead men all—most foully murdered—
Drugged past all doctoring !

*Beort.* It crossed me too that thought. But honest Beerwulf,

Albeit he maltreat words and murder meaning,
He is no poisoner.

*Ken.* Oh, fool!—fool!—fool!—
Juggled—twice juggled—juggled by a woman!—
Done out of life at last!

*Beort.* What says he, Worr?

*Ken.* False—hell-born—harlot queen!

*Beort.* Traitor! traducer!
Wouldst thou blaspheme the queen—my wife—thy mistress?

*Ken.* True hast thou titled her. She is all three.
My mistress was she ere she was thy wife—
My mistress hath been when she was thy queen!
She never loved thee; she is tired of me—
So tokens this love-cup. But oh! to die
(*Speaking as to himself.*)
A ban-dog's death, and now! when my fair fortune
Rode on its top of flood; when Offa's death,
Known but to me—

*Beort.* Doth he not rave, Worr?—ha!
Oh, swear it me he raves. If he doth not,
'Tis time that I were dead. (WORR *remains silent.*)

*Ken.* (*still as to himself.*) Ecfrid removed,
She 's Mercia's queen. Now, now, I see it all.
The virtuous widow to the banished Egbert
Will tender her chaste hand, and so remain
The queen of Wessex too!

*Worr.* How fares my lord?

*Beort.* Oh, worse than plague or pincer e'er could rack
The fleshly fibre, Worr. Poisoned! oh, poisoned
In soul, to my soul's core! That 's the addition

That maketh death more terrible than dying.
And yet I loved her so!

*Worr.* But how is it
I feel no ferment in my blood or brain?
My pulse plays evenly—my nerves are firm—
I freely breathe—mine eye sees steadily—
I am not poisonèd, at least I think not,
Yet me she hated most. How happens this?

*Ken.* (*to himself.*) How happens it, indeed! And yet his cup
I drugged, and drugged it well!

(*He falls from his seat. What follows is spoken in delirium.*)

Quick, bury me Beortric—
Offa is dead—Strangle the Ethling Ecfrid—
And bring me Egbert's head—God save Edburga,
My wife—the queen of Mercia and Wessex!—
Dissolve the hexarchy—We must have a Bretwalda—
And Kenred shall be— (*Dies.*)

(BEORTRIC *gradually sinks in* WORR'S *arms from his seat to the floor.*)

*Worr.* Help! for the love of Heaven!
He dies.

*Beort.* (*faintly.*) I'm past help, Worr. Send for Lord Egbert,
He is mine heir. Charge him that wicked woman—
Dark, dark, and cold! Give me thine hand. Farewell.
(*Dies.*

*Worr.* My lord—my king—my friend—Beortric! stay

One little moment but to hear me swear—
Alas! thou canst not hear— (*Kneeling.*)
While o'er this pale, cold heap of royal clay
I swear my sword shall ne'er inhabit scabbard
While thy fell murderess wears her bloody crown
Or poisons Wessex with her harlot's breath. (*Starting up.*)
Away! Vengeance claims first her dues, then sorrow.
To-day revenge! Weep if there 's time to-morrow. [*Exit.*

END OF ACT III.

# ACT IV.

## Scene First.

AIX-LA-CHAPELLE — THE PALACE OF CHARLEMAGNE.

(CHARLEMAGNE, ALCUIN, EGINHART. EGINHART *holds in his hand a roll of parchment which he has just done reading aloud.*)

*Charlemagne.* Enough, good Eginhart. The Latin's choice,
It could not miss with Alcuin and thyself
To be its warranters. Give me the parchment. (*Signs it.*)
Beshrew me, Alcuin! thou 'rt like the ocean
That gulps down river after river momently,
Yet 's ne'er the fuller, nor cries out Enough!
Thy triviums and quadriviums, schools and colleges,
Tours, Soissons, Paris, Fulden, harry so
My poor exchequer, thou 'lt not leave me doit,
Fortress or fleet may build against my spoilers,
These Dacian pirates and these Pagan Huns.
*Alcuin.* Thou 'lt need them less, my lord.
*Charlem.* Ay, ay; so preaches
My friend Pope Adrian. But he 's smit too
With thy disease, this Greek and Grammar fever;
He thinks the hornbook will work miracles,
And witch us back the golden age from Heaven.

*Alc.* And so, my lord, it shall.

*Charlem.* Ha! ha! Think'st thou?
Then for beginning would it witched that pagan,
The Saxon Wittikind, and the Dane Gotfred,
To burn their ships, and roast their gods to charcoal,
And suffer my poor Christian Franks o' nights
To keep their heads on quietly on their pillows—
There were a miracle!

*Alc.* Thou 'lt live to witness it;
So mind my prophecy.

*Charlem.* And if it fail?

*Alc.* Hang the false prophet.

*Charlem.* Humph! 'twere poor amend—
And then the prophet may foredie the proof.
But there be others at my court have donned
The prophet's cloak as well as thou, Sir Alcuin—
Both Palatine and priest; and their vaticiny
Jumps not, but jars with thine.

*Alc.* How do they prophesy?

*Charlem.* That these same schools impoverish so my treasury
To sow West Christendom, will yield for harvest
Sour fruit and deadly—theoric bubble-blowers,
Word-shuffling sophisters, pragmatic heresists,
Like thy co-disputant, that Catalonian,
The Bishop of Urgel; spouting seditioners
That on their dunghills clap their wings and crow
Against both Heaven and Cæsar! So they prophesy;
Do they not truly?

*Alc.* Even, my lord, as one—
Painter or poet—limning the green age

Doth inter-term betwixt our man and boy,
That unripe heady age
That knows too much upon the boyish breech
To brook the scalping scourge, yet not enough
To square itself by reason's rule unwhipped,
Should under-write his libel 'Lo! pourtrayed
Our altogether life!'
The fever-youth of knowledge must by nations
Be lived through as by men; the hot half-way,
The stage of peril and of passage:—but,
That over-lived, ensues the full-day noon,
The world's ripe manhood, in whose perfect light
Thrive wholesome liberty, and humble faith,
And love, and order, and humanity!

*Charlem.* Ay, Alcuin! ay—I will believe it so,
And take thee for my prophet. So stint not
To sweat my treasury in furtherance—
So pass we that.—Thy news from Mercia vex me—
My virtuous kinswoman! Is it not strange
So foul a devil should own so fair a temple?

So her most piteous tale had nigh surprised
Mine old man's eyes to weeping 's after all
But an Arabian's fable—and this Saxon,
This bloody-minded regicidal villain—

*Alc.* As voucheth Croyland's Abbot, innocent—
Slandered most foully—and, besides, he 's here.

*Charlem.* Lord Worr! What brings him?

*Alc.* To appeal thy justice
Against his libeller, and tender Egbert
His right, the crown of Wessex.

*Charlem.* By my faith, then,
He comes inopportunely.

*Alc.* How, my lord?

*Charlem.* To bar the banns betwixt the mournful widow
And her elect bridegroom.

*Alc.* Her bridegroom—who?

*Charlem.* Why, this same Egbert. He 's a lucky fellow,
Angled on both sides for. Edburga claims him
To lead her battle; and to whet his sword
To a sharper edge, she offers him to halve
Her bed and throne with him. Thy countrywoman,
Beshrew me, Alcuin, hath good taste in husbands!

*Alc.* But will Lord Egbert foul his spotless fame,
And for so base a lure?

*Charlem.* We'll see, we'll see;
The devil that tempts is fair.—But ha! my boy!

(*Enter* PRINCE CHARLES, *followed by* EGBERT, ALRED, ETHELMUND, *and other Captains. The* PRINCE, *about to kneel, is prevented by his father, who embraces him affectionately.*)

Thou 'rt welcome from Bohemia, whence thou fetchest
A waggon-load of laurels! Eginhart
And Alcuin here—I know not if it be
Earnest or jest, have named or nicknamed me
Great Charles. But thou wilt vindicate, I doubt not,
That title by desert of deed thine own,
I owe to fortune or to flattery.
So that proud rebel 's quiet at the last—
Bohemian Lesco! Yet, to do him right,
He was a gallant foe; peasant or Paladin,

There were right few durst, man to man, have challenged
him
In our broad Christendom.
*Prince Charles.* One such, at least,
There was to dare 't and do—this brave West-Saxon,
Who, foot to foot in bloody characters,
Recorded him his better.
*Charlem.* Ha! Lord Egbert,
Was 't thou performed this gallant feat of arms?
*Prince Ch.* He fought Duke Lesco on the Oder's bank,
In sight of either host fairly, and slew him.
*Charlem.* 'Twas bravely done, Egbert—'twas bravely
done!
It copes thy claims, which grew so fast on me,
I feared I ne'er could guerdon them. Thank Heaven,
Hath sent the means at last! How wouldst thou reck thee
Of a fair crown, dowered with a fairer bed-fellow
To halve 't with thee?
*Egb.* I am a mere knight-errant,
Poor as my sword, and therewithal a bachelor,
Whom it would ill beseem—didst thou but jest—
With either boon to quarrel, good my lord.
*Charlem.* Nay, on my faith, I do not jest with thee—
But hereby tender thee a fond fair bride,
My kinswoman, who proffers thee for night-cap
A regal coronet.
*Egb.* And what kind lady
Squanders her bounty in so unthrift shower
On my so poor desert?
*Charlem.* One knows thee, Egbert,

And rates thee at thy worth, thy countrywoman,
King Offa's daughter.

*Egb.* Ha! fair Ethelburga?

*Charlem.* Nay, but the fair Edburga.

*Egb.* Humph! methinks
One husband might content her.

*Charlem.* But he 's dead!

*Egb.* Beortric dead?

*Charlem.* Ay, at his birthday's banquet
Ta'en off by poison!

(ALRED *and* ETHELMUND *here exchange looks significantly.*)

*Egb.* Poisoned, my lord! By whom?

*Charlem.* By a West Saxon lord whom much he trusted,
Lord Worr by name.

*Alred and Ethelm.* Impossible!

*Charlem.* So voucheth me
The Queen Edburga.

*Ethelm.* At the court of Wessex
There were who dealt in deadly stuffs, as proved
The good Lord Ethbald, but the noble Worr
Was not of them.

*Charlem.* I 've rendered thee mine author.

*Alred.* Whoe'er the voucher, good my lord, assure thee
The tale is false, most villainously false;
And man to man I gage to prove it so
In his foul throat shall dare assever it.

*Charlem.* Then 'tis Lord Egbert must take up thy gage:
He 's Queen Edburga's champion. She hath chosen him
The general of her host, her bed and seat-fellow

On a co-equal throne: for the which grace, doubtless,
He is her thanksman vowed. So dowered, so fair,
Drop not each leap-year from the liberal clouds.
Besides, 'tis said old love 's like smouldering fire,
Suppressed to seeming, which the lightest breath
O' the passing wind stirs to its ancient fierceness.
And Alcuin here informs me, ere he left
The court of Mercia, Egbert and Edburga
Were all but trothed, and Offa did so purpose it.
So they have loved of old. And Egbert, trust me,
When thou hast looked thee on the fond fair widow,
Thou 'lt force-confess me that ripe six-and-twenty
Out-charms even fresh nineteen.

*Egb.* If King Beortric
Be dead, my lord, in right of blood his crown
Hath fallen to me. As such I challenge it,
Nor will I owe 't to other grace or gifting—
Be 't man's or woman's—save to Heaven's alone,
With mine own sword to second. For Edburga,
Were she unchallenged sole inheritrix
Of thy proud empire, from the Pyrenee
To th' Oder and Avarian Danuby;
Or brought she in her lap in golden dower
The wealth of Bagdat, and whate'er the Sofi,
Persia's wise Caliph, thy friend Haroun owns,
I 'd mate me sooner with the lankest Arab
Tans in the desert, or the blearest wench
Is smoke-smirched in the Suevian's forest-hut,
Than wed me with—

*Charlem.* My kinswoman, Lord Egbert?

*Egb.* Nay, pardon me, I pray thee, good my lord.
That I 'm so blunt of speech.
*Charlem.* Hold thee unpurposed
Till thou hast seen Edburga. 'Tis the hour
I fixed to render her in open audience
Mine answer to her prayer. Attend me, lords,
To the high council-hall.

[*Exit, followed by* PRINCE CHARLES *and the rest.*

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## Scene Second.

THE GREAT COUNCIL-HALL.

(CHARLEMAGNE *on his throne;* PRINCE CHARLES *standing on his right, with* EGINHART *and other Lords; on his left,* EGBERT, *with* ALCUIN, WORR, ALRED, *and* ETHELMUND. *Enter* EDBURGA, *attended by her ladies.* CHARLEMAGNE, *rising, bows to her, and she is led to a chair of state.*)

*Charlemagne.* Fair cousin! I did promise thee whene'er
My son returned from the Bohemian wars
With thy brave countryman, the noble Egbert,
Thou shouldst have audience, and with my utmost
Thy wrongs a swift redress. It needed not,
My royal cousin, those rich gifts have put
Accepting on the blush, to herald thee
To a disposèd judge.
Thy mother was my kinswoman; thy father,
King Offa, was my friend; thy murdered husband
My neighbour and ally. But, fair Edburga,

It needed not even that. Thou hast been wronged—
A woman and a widowed; and when Charles
Lends such appealing a deaf ear, or cold,
The royal staff shames the unkingly hand
That graspeth it. So speak thee boldly, cousin,
Thy wrongs and thy request.

*Edburga.* I have already
My tale delivered to thy private ear;
Spare me, my lord, before so many hearers
Repeating it of new. For when my fancy
Disturbs the smouldering ashes of the past,
Remembrance comes so freshly over me
It drives me ever from my sober mind,
And turns report to raving.

*Charlem.* Nay, but, fair cousin,
So much as needs Lord Egbert and my son
In preface to thy suit.

*Edb.* This much in brief then:—
At midnight in the banquet-hall I left
The King my husband, with Lords Worr and Kenred,
Carousing healths, and quaffing—so I hoped—
Its death-cup to the feud so long had festered
Betwixt these Saxon lords. Alas! next morn
Rose upon me a widow. Worr had fled,
Forging a damnèd tale. The shallow rabble,
Who knew not of the hate he bore to Kenred
And my poor murdered lord—

(WORR *here attempts to interrupt her, but is restrained from speaking by* ALCUIN.)

had lately banished

Lords Ethelmund and Alred, his chief friends,
With idiot ear, swallowing his traitor's tale,
By rebel thousands crowded to his standard.
Palsied with grief, a woman, and a widow,
My husband murdered, and my father dead,
A boy upon his throne, alas! what could I?
I fled to thee, my father's friend, my kinsman,
To claim protection and implore revenge.

*Worr.* Hear me, my lord.

*Charlem.* Nay, give me leave. What tale,
Fair cousin, was it that thou speakest of,
Blew up the popular rage so fierce against thee?

*Edb.* I blush to speak, I shame my lord to think of it,
It was so monstrous.

*Charlem.* That, 'twas thou and Kenred
Were the true poisoners; that some error passed
Cross-chance to Kenred that was drugged for Worr;
That this same Kenred to Beortric's bed
Had found forbidden way—then spiced his posset
That he might wed the helper in his sin,
The King Beortric's widow; that this tale
Had Kenred's dying self for warranter:
Ran not the story so?

*Edb.* It was so vile,
I scarce can say—but some such tale it was.

*Charlem.* Murder and harlotry! O fy! fy! fy!
'Tis foul, 'tis foul! and that 'tis false as foul,
Were infidel to doubt in him who looks
On that so goodly face. There 's not a sword
Sleeps in its knightly scabbard in this presence

But would forth instantly to prove him liar,
The villain libelled thee! Fy! fy! fair cousin,
How may I do thee right?
*Edb.* So thou do lend me "
What succours may re-conquer that meantime
Rebellion and foul calumny have lost me;
And to that end a captain whose proved fitness,
May lead my battles, and instruct my counsels.
*Charlem.* Among my captains know'st thou any such?
*Edb.* One such, my lord, I know.
*Charlem.* And who is he
Thou deignest so to honour?
*Edb.* The Lord Egbert.
*Charlem.* A worthier choice for council or for war,
Fair cousin, thou couldst not. A braver soldier,
Or a more politic, mine army counts not.
*Edb.* And for my lord that over these West Saxons,
A woman-king doth hold the reins of rule
In a too feeble hand, and that Lord Egbert,
Inherits royal blood, the blood of Cerdic,
Our first West Saxon king, which he enriches
By his own proper worth, I do free render him,
If that so poor a gift be worth accepting,
My widowed hand and partnered royalty.
*Egb.* My lord, my lord—
*Charlem.* Nay, with thy leave, Lord Egbert;
Be worth accepting, didst thou say, Edburga!
It is a prize might kings and emperors
Transform to gamblers, and i' th' playing peril
Kingdoms and crowns for counters. Thou 'rt too fair

For yonder northern isle, whose murky sky
Will dim thy beauty's lustre that should radiate
From an imperial throne. Fastrada's death
Has left me like thyself without a bedfellow ;—
Let the Lord Egbert o'er his fierce West Saxons
King it, and welcome, while Edburga's beauty
Draws prouder worship from an emperor's throne !
My beard, 'tis true, hath ta'en some touch o' the hoar-frost,
And my ripe girdle doth o'erpass somewhat
The painter's perpendicular. But what tho' ?
The monarch oak 's not like the forest vulgar,
There 's sap and vigour in 't when the ditch-willow
And rank plebeian alder rot with age,
Dead stocks to fagot fire ! And when I look
On thy so queenly form, I feel, Edburga,
There 's in my veins yet blood shall father kings !
We 'll get us boys, Edburga, like this boy here,
Again shall whip me these Bohemians
Should they again rebel. How answerest thou
Fair cousin—yea or nay ?

(*During this speech all the lords by their looks express much surprise, except* ALCUIN *and* EGINHART, *who exchange looks and smile.*)

*Egb.* My lord, for me—

*Charlem.* Ay, ay. I guess, Lord Egbert,
All thou wouldst say. I know thou 'st conned whate'er
Is writ by Alcuin here, thy countryman,
On the Art Rhetoric—his learned treatise too,
Of Solomon and his queens, the threescore queens

That most wise Jew did most unwisely wed,
And thence spake evil of the fairer kind.
Thou 'rt i' the rhetorics a dangerous tilt-fellow
To joust withal. Thou 'dst play the orator,
I know, and thanksgiver to this fair widow
For her so loving grace, and with so mastery
I' the parts of speech, that when I glance me o'er
Thine other parts auxiliar thereunto,
Of port and person, bone and blood and muscle,
Beshrew me, Egbert, 'twere most unfair odds
Against old Charlemagne. So prithee peace!
And let our fair Sultana heave the handkerchief,
Untempted, unappealed. Who wins Edburga?
Egbert or Charlemagne?

*Edb.* Nay, good my lord,
Not now—not here!

*Charlem.* Ay, now or never, lady.
My loving Franks demand an empress from me.
This day I 'm promised to bestow one on them:—
If thou reject my hand, I 'm ready now
To name another queen.

*Edb.* I would, my lord,
Thou hadst accorded me more grace of time
In so unhoped a question.
But since thy pleasure and the exigence
Of my unhousèd fortunes rule it so,
I 'll speak thee frankly what a woman's wit,
Ta'en o' the unaware, weak and uncounselled,
Prompteth my woman's tongue.
When I bethink me

Of that so bloody deed and damnable,
From Wessex hunted me an exiled queen
And a defamèd woman, and the rebels
In arms inhabit there, factioned and sworn
Against my life and fame—and that heaven's grace
And thine imperial favour yield unlooked for
A kindlier home—if but the noble Egbert
Will deign forgiveness—

*Egb.* (*eagerly.*) I do! I do! I do!

*Edb.* Methinks I 'd rather—

*Charlem.* Sleep in an emperor's arms.
So—so—
Thou hast preferred me to the younger suitor
And the less powerful. But there 's another
Younger than Egbert and as powerful
To th' full as Charlemagne—my son Prince Charles.

*Edb.* Prince Charles, my lord!

*Charlem.* Thy beauty's prisoner,
Caught o' the sudden. Look on him, Edburga,
He's young, thou seest, and fair. How brave he is,
The Huns, the Lombards, the Bohemians,
All Europe will attest thee. He divides
Mine empire living, and when I am dead
Reigns the sole emperor of West Christendom.
Choose then betwixt us. Wilt thou have for husband
The old Charles or the young?

*Edb.* Hath 't not been proverbed
In every speech, my lord, that happy wedlock
Betwixt its yoke-fellows demands proportion
Of station and of years?

*Charlem.* What then, Edburga ?
I 've heard me some such say.
*Edb.* It were not wise
Methinks, my lord, to wholly counter us
To so time-tried a rule.
*Charlem.* Ha ! thou wouldst signify
My son 's too much thy younger ?
*Edb.* Nay, my lord,
That thou 'rt too much mine elder. Reverence
Will twine 't with hoary hairs. Love grafts it only
On the fresh stem of youth. Methinks a bride
Should not bring with her to the genial bed
An iced observancy, where jealous love
Looks for responsive love—I choose thy son.
*Charlem.* Ha ! dost thou, wantonness ? Then by my faith
Thou shalt have neither—neither sire nor son.
Hadst thou choiced otherwise, thou hadst somewhat
Cleared thee of that whereof the general voice
Hath foul reported thee. But pride, ambition,
First bade thee spurn the worthier for the unworthier,
Manhood for age, Egbert for Charlemagne ;
Now lust must have his due, and womanhood,
Matronly womanhood, to quench foul fire,
Must under-couch a boy ! The tainted blood
Thou took'st from either source, Offa's ambition
And Dritha's wantonness, in thy hot veins
Hath venomous increase. Off with these gauds !
They do but mock a cloistered penitent !
*Edb.* A cloistered penitent, my lord !
*Charlem.* Ay, Jezebel,

There is thy henceforth home. Its hard stone bed
Will take no rumple from thy wanton limbs;
Nor will thy sackcloth's drapery disclose
The harlot heavings of thy pampered flesh
To tempt the only man shall look on thee,
Thy ghostly penancer, and he the sternest,
The oldest, coldest, serest of the brotherhood!

*Edb.* My lord—my lord!

*Charlem.* Peace! call me in the Abbess,
The lady Hildegarde.

(*Enter the Abbess.*)

Here, take thy penitent, and deal with her
As I instructed thee, as one 's in blood
My kinswoman, yet hath, needs penancing,
Sins of a damned dye.

(*Exit the* ABBESS, *accompanied haughtily and in silence by* EDBURGA.)

And now, King Egbert,
I greet thee in thy right the King of Wessex,
Which thou, I prophesy, wilt soon disname,
Giving yon northern isle one overlord,
For its vexed hexarchy; which, were it one,
One undisportioned, undistracted realm,
Might from its proud sea-moated tower, methinks,
Laugh at the world in arms, germing an empire
To which the giant Roman in his pride
Were as the boy doth miniature the man!
West Saxon lords, do homage to your king—
Thine hand, my brother.—

[*The scene drops, as* WORR, ALRED, *and* ETHELMUND *advance to do homage to* KING EGBERT.

# ACT V.

## Scene First.

CROYLAND ABBEY IN LINCOLNSHIRE.

(*Enter the* ABBOT WYNHELM *and* ETHELBURGA, *the latter wringing her hands.*)

*Ethelburga.* Banished the convent!
*Wynhelm.* It repents me, daughter,
That I have told it thee. But that rash promise—
*Ethelburga.* Banished the convent, and thrust forth with shame
With an unholy burthen! Wretched sister!
Oh, when I think me of our girlhood days,
The innocent, the happy, all that follows
Seems one long frightful dream! Alas! alas!
Sin following sin, and shame succeeding shame!
Lost, lost Edburga!
*Wynh.* Nay, despair not, daughter.
Heaven's grace may find her at the eleventh hour,
And send her home new-born. It marvels me
That two such flowers should grow on the one same tree.
*Ethelburga.* O marvel not! Tempest o'ertook me early

In life's sad voyage, and betimes I havened
In this dear nook from shipwreck. Poor Edburga
Shouldered the storm and she has foundered in 't.

*Wynh.* Nay but, dear daughter, thou forget'st mine errand.

*Ethelburga.* True, true. What brings King Egbert hither,
wott'st thou?
Hath he found out the royal fugitive,
And that we harbour him?

*Wynh.* I cannot tell,
But would thy kinsman sought some other shelter!

*Ethelburga.* Would Egbert violate our right of sanctuary?

*Wynh.* King Ethelbald, who chartered us our rights,
Was Mercia's king, but Egbert is Bretwalda,
The overlord of all the hexarchy.

*Ethelburga.* Would he do sacrilege to reach at murder
Because he has the power and is Bretwalda?
The holy bones are tombed within these walls,
Would start methinks to life in testimony
Against a deed so foul! Is he so changed,
The honoured friend of him whose memory
I worship next to Heaven?

*Wynh.* I say not so,
Nor do I think he is. Albeit his sword
Has seldom slumbered in a peaceful scabbard,
I do believe me honestly, not choice
Unsheathed it, but necessity. He 's shed
No Saxon blood save in the countering
Of the fair battle-field, but governs mildly
What he hath bravely won. Were not our charge
So passing precious, and his realm of Mercia

The only saxarchy whose insubjection
Dangers King Egbert's power, I 'd peril 't boldly
Upon his nobleness.
*Ethelburga.* Then we will peril it.
So tell his messenger I 'll see King Egbert.
Her one request the friend of Ethelbert
Will not refuse his widow. [*Exeunt.*

---

## Scene Second.

ANOTHER APARTMENT IN THE SAME.

(WYNHELM *and* WORR.)

*Wynhelm.* O 'tis most strange, most sad! There 's moral in 't,
My good Lord Worr, whose eloquence outspeaks
Preacher or prophet.
Proud Offa's daughter, she who scorned to be
A simple queen, nor would be less than empress,—
A public mendicant! But who hath vouched this?
*Worr.* Two lords of Wessex on return from Rome
Saw her in rags i' th' public streets of Pavia,
Her bastard on her arm, begging an alms,
And gave their dole to her. Moreover, Alcuin,
By letters to King Egbert, hath confirmed it.
*Wynh.* Is 't known who was the partner of her sin,
The father of her child?
*Worr.* A young West Saxon,
One of the train attended her to France.

Whose boyish beauty favoured her device
To pass him for her Saxon servitress.
*Wynh.* And what became of him?
*Worr.* Slain in her chamber,—
If rumour may be trusted, in her bed.
Thrust from the convent, she hath led her since,
A life of wandering and of wanton shame,
Venal and vile, through all the courts of Italy;
Until the bulky burthen of her womb,
And waning beauty, blasted by disease,
Drove from her door the crowd of worshippers
Had flocked to her lewd shrine. Then goading want,
And sacred nature, sovereign over pride,
Compelled her forth to th' streets and thoroughfares
To glean her beggar's meal.
*Wynh.* Is this tale recent?
Lives she, is 't known, and still at Pavia?
*Worr.* No.
Of late she 's disappeared, and 'tis surmised,
Has with th' innocent voucher of her guilt
Perished of want.
*Wynh.* Her sister's shame will kill
Poor Ethelburga, for as yet she knows not
What followed her expelling from the convent.
King Egbert must be warned.
*Worr.* King Egbert holds
That noble lady in so worshipped honour
He would not pain her chaste ear with the telling
A so unhappy and unholy tale.
I 'll warn him ne'ertheless.

*Wynh.* I 'll go receive him
At th' Abbey's gate, and lead him straight to her. [*Exeunt.*

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## Scene Third.

A COTTAGE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF CROYLAND ABBEY.

(*At the door the cottage dame in conversation with* EDBURGA, *who is in wretched attire, emaciated, and labouring under fever, with an infant on her arm.*)

*Dame.* It is a long way off. Thou 'rt ill, good woman ;
Rest thee awhile. Thou 'lt ne'er reach Croyland Abbey,
Trust me, unless thou do.
*Edb.* Oh, I am strong,
Lightsome, and merry. There 's in your air, methinks,
Since last I breathed it, some rare quality
Surpassing excellent. One may journey in 't,
Ay, days and days and days, yet feel no weariness.
It is but two days past they landed us,
Myself and Dritha, on th' East Angles' coast,
And we have journeyed hither night and day
And day and night—yet neither, as thou seest,
Weary a whit. Dritha grows gossamer,
Lighter and lighter, every mile we go.
Oh, we will reach us Croyland ere the dark.
Have we not journeyed bravely ?
*Dame.* Lack-a-day !
If thou not wanderest in thy speech, poor woman,

'Tis feat had tasked the strongest man in Mercia.
Why sped ye on so fast?

*Edb.* Ah! that 's a secret,
But I will whisper 't in thine ear. They 'd seize
My pretty Dritha here—and so I ran
And ran and ran—Ha! ha! ha! ha!

*Dame.* From whom?
Who 'd seize thy child?

*Edb.* Why, Ethelbert, be sure.

*Dame.* And who is Ethelbert?

*Edb.* The East Angles' king.

*Dame.* Nay, nay, how can that be? King Ethelbert
Is long time dead.

*Edb.* Indeed!

*Dame.* Slain cruelly,
By Offa, our late king.

*Edb.* Ha! ha! ha! ha!
Heigho! And yet I loved him.

*Dame.* Thou art ill.
Pray thee come in. I fear me thou art dying.

*Edb.* Ha! then I must away.

*Dame.* Whither?

*Edb.* To Croyland.
There must no dying till I get to Croyland.

*Dame.* And why?

*Edb.* Ay, why?—that 's it—Oh, now I have it.
There 's in the Abbey some one I would speak with;
And yet, beshrew me! 'twas but yesterday
I knew it all. Canst thou not tell me who
It is I 'd speak withal?

*Dame.* Belike the Abbot,
The good old Wynhelm, or some holy brother,
Should, ere thou die, assoil thee of thy sins.

*Edb.* My sins! hush, hush, who told thee of my sins?
'Twas Kenred, was it not?

*Dame.* Nay, no one told me,
Save the in-conscience tells me of mine own.

*Edb.* Ho! ho! conscience! Thou hast a conscience too!

*Dame.* Surely I have.

*Edb.* And sins?

*Dame.* Ay.

*Edb.* Many?

*Dame.* Yes;
Too many.

*Edb.* Say'st thou? Ha! ha! ha! I'm glad of it.
Give me thine hand. Thou'rt wicked, very wicked,
Tell me, art not? As wicked as myself,
Or Kenred, or those lords of Italy,
Of Venice and of Pavia. Art thou not?
Ha! ha! ha!
Give me thine hand.

*Dame.* Woe's me!—this soft, small hand.
Unhappy wanderer! Whosoe'er thou be,
Thou hast not always been what thou art now.
Those slender fingers, burning to the touch,
Faded and fleshless, have I guess ere now,
Been ringed with jewelled gold. That robe of rags,
But halfly shields thee from the weather's wrong,
Thou wearest like one in silken bravery,

Hath swept through lordly halls. That wasted cheek,
Those bloodshot eyes, lovers have sworn them by.
*Edb.* Hist! hist! no more of that! They swore, 'tis true.—
All, all, all, all!—and yet they all forsook me.
Was it not cruel done? Didst thou e'er love
As I have done?
*Dame.* I have loved honestly.
*Edb.* Ay, honestly—and when he scorned thy love,
Didst thou not murder him?
*Dame.* He did not scorn me.
But an he did—
*Edb.* Ay, an he did!—then! then!
Even on his bridal night thou wouldst ha' murdered him,
Wouldst not?
*Dame.* Not for ten thousand worlds!
*Edb.* Thou hadst a husband too as I had once?
*Dame.* I had.
*Edb.* And he was poisoned at the banquet
By one did use thy bed.
*Dame.* Out—out upon thee!
Thy thoughts are horrible; save but my husband
None ever used my bed.
*Edb.* Thy child—thou hadst
A child, hadst not?
*Dame.* I had.
*Edb.* Like Dritha here;
The child of pain and shame.
*Dame.* Of pain, indeed,
But not of shame.
*Edb.* Was not thy husband's?

*Dame.* Fy !
Thy fancies are most foul ! Lived woman, think'st thou,
So devil did all this ?
*Edb.* I cannot mind me
Her name. And yet it was but yesterday
I knew it all. They said she was a queen.
*Dame.* Oh, now I guess me. Thou hast heard by snatches
Some horrid passages thy sickness turns
To yet more horrid in the sinful life
Of that most wicked woman, Queen Edburga.
*Ed.* Hush, hush, forbear that name ! Dost thou not know
They have defended it on pain of treason ?
Thou must not utter it ; no, not in sleep,
They 'll overhear thee else.
*Dame.* Who 'll overhear me ?
*Edb.* Egbert, and he, that terrible emperor.
Dost thou not spy them yonder watching us
Behind those trees ?
*Dame.* Nay, nay.
*Edb.* Stealing towards us
On tiptoe thus ; to seize my pretty Dritha.
But we shall baulk them yet, shall we not, Dritha ?
We 've yet some wind in us.
*Dame.* Nay, nay, beseech thee,
Fear not, I 'll hide thee from their search—come in ;
Pray thee come in. Give me thy little one.
(*Offering to take the child.*)
*Ed.* Ha ! an it come to that, 'tis time to run ;
I 'll never part with Dritha—ha ! ha ! ha !
(*Runs off in a frantic manner.*)

*Dame.* Alas! alas! I cannot hinder her.
She'll perish by the way. Her brain 's on fire;
And that poor innocent!—I'll after them
As best I may. Her fever lends her fleetness
And strength o'erpasseth nature. [*Exit after* EDBURGA.

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## Scene Fourth.

CROYLAND ABBEY—AN APARTMENT.

(EGBERT, WYNHELM, *and* ETHELBURGA.)

*Egbert.* No thanks—I merit none. Had Witlaf's self,
On those same terms that he hath now subscribed,
Appealed to me, I had restored his kingdom,
So he acknowledged me for overlord.
I 've frankly rendered you the why I cannot
Bate that condition.

*Ethelburga.* And it were not well,
Methinks, for Witlaf's self thou didst abate it.
For when I ponder on the wars so long
Have made our isle a Saxon slaughter-house
In endless broil of brother against brother;
And when I reckon in my native Mercia
How many kings in mine own memory
Like the unsteadfast pageants in a scene
Following my father Offa, brooked their turn
In a brief royalty: my brother Ecfrid,
Then Kenulf, and then Kinelm the boy-saint,
Murdered by Wendreda, his wicked sister,

That she might climb his throne. Then Theolulf;
Then his displacer Bernulf; Ludecan;
And last, this Witlaf;—oh! methinks 'tis Heaven
Ordains of pity that one vigorous will
Should overlord this so distracted isle,
And end perforce our Saxon anarchies,
From the dejected mass, new building him
A powerful one out of the powerless many.

*Egb.* Lady, it is my hope. The times require it,
While these Vikingr from their Dacian creeks
Make black our British seas, the fierce sea-kings
Whose kingdom is the wave, whose home their ship,
Whose boast it is never to taste of sleep
Beneath a smoky roof, or quaff their cup
Beside the household hearth; who drink the blood
Hot from their quarry's side; whose food is won
Chased with a flowing sail; whose merriest pastime
From lance to lance to toss the shrieking babe
Torn from the mother's breast: to cope such enemies
Concord needs league with courage; and the names
Mercian, West Saxon, and Northumbrian,
Be henceforth blotted our vocabulary.
One speech doth bind us and one cause already;
One name must bind us too. What shall it be?
How shall I christen this my new-born kingdom?

*Ethelburga.* Ha! dost thou ask of me?

*Egb.* Howe'er thou namest it,
Lady, it shall be named!

*Ethelburga.* They loved him well—

*Egb.* Whom speak'st thou of?

*Ethelburga.* They slew thine enemies
Bernulf and Ludecan.

*Egb.* Th' East Angles slew them.

*Ethelburga.* Thou hadst a friend too, one was dear to thee ;—
He was their king.

*Egb.* He was—poor Ethelbert !

*Ethelburga.* Name it for him. Give it his people's name,
The Angles' land.

*Egb.* By heaven ! it shall be so ;
Angland ! auspicious be thy baptism
And proud thy destiny ! Thine unborn daughters
Be fair, be spotless, as this royal maid !
Thy priesthood faithful as this holy man !
Thy kings more patriot and thy sons far braver
Than he now lends thee name ! Ah ! Ethelburga,
I 've granted thee one boon. 'Tis now my turn
To sue thee for a dearer (*kneels*).

*Ethelburga.* In Heaven's name,
Why dost thou kneel to me ? My lord, my lord,
Beseech thee, rise.

*Egb.* Not till thou 'st heard my prayer.
I 'm queenless, Ethelburga, and a soldier,
The nursling of the camp whose rugged nurture
Needeth the guiding of a softer will
To steer him wisely through the untried course
Of courtly governaunce. Be, Ethelburga !
Be thou that gentle guide !

*Ethelburga.* Wouldst thou for wife
A wretch

Whose cheeks are channelled with unceasing tears—
Who weeps the day, and nightly in her dreams
Doth call on Ethelbert?

*Egb.* I loved him so,
I 'll bear it all; and in thy heart content me
With but the second place.

*Ethelburga.* I have a vow,
Vowed on heaven's altar, not to be repealed,
Here in my tearful cell to live and die
The virgin widow, as the virgin bride,
Of murdered Ethelbert. Were not my purpose
Unalterably so, my lord, assure thee
There liveth not I had as liefly wed
As royal Egbert. But this holy man
Will vouch thee it is so.

*Wynh.* My lord, I vouch it.
Well hath she kept her vow! Her life a lesson
Of saintly perfectness rebukes us all.

(*Noise and bustle heard without. Enter a Friar.*)

What is it, brother?

*Friar.* A wretched wanderer and her child are dying
Outside the Abbey's gate; the cottage dame
Gisla reporteth us.

*Ethelburga.* A woman, saidst thou?
I boast some leech-craft learnt from our good Abbot;
I will attend on her.

*Egb.* We will go with thee. [*Exeunt.*

## Scene Fifth.

AN AVENUE OF OLD TREES OUTSIDE THE MONASTERY.

(*At the foot of one of them* EDBURGA, *with her child in her arms, is discovered stretched out as dying. Enter the* COTTAGE DAME, *followed by* ETHELBURGA, EGBERT, *and* WYNHELM.)

*Ethelburga.* There is no time to lose. She must be moved
Within the Abbey.

*Dame.* Nay, I think, kind lady,
She 's past removing now. Before I quitted her
Not many moments since, she sang her wildly,
And laughed, and talked strange things. She 's altered suddenly—
Her hand, so burning hot, feels icy cold—
Death 's dealing closely with her.

*Ethelburga.* So I fear.
But we must save her child.

(*The dame offers to take the child from her.*)

*Edburga* (*faintly*). Spare, spare my Dritha,
Thou cruel man! They slew her sinful father
In a forbidden place. Oh, kill not Dritha!

*Ethelburga.* Alas! poor wretch, her brain is wandering still.
We will not harm thy child.

*Edb.* (*wildly.*) Ha! where am I?
Whose voice was that? I 've heard it in my dreams.

As when I heard it on that bloody night,
In that so fearful shriek !

*Ethelburga.* Nay, nay, good woman,
'Tis but a stranger's voice, but 'tis a friend's.

*Edb.* Again ! that voice ! Oh, I have heard me 't oft,
Methought in holy walls when virgin choirs
Anthem'd their praise to Heaven ; I 've heard me it
In my mid revels in Italian halls ;
It hath awoke me from my sinful sleep
In the rank closure of unholy arms ;
I 've heard it as I whined my beggar's plea
Through sad Pavia's streets. I 've heard me it
At midnight, in the winds and in the waves
As they did waft me to my native shore—
My sister Ethelburga's !

*Ethelburga.* Gracious Heaven !
But no, it cannot be !—this haggard wretch—
This wasted form—those beggar's weeds—that hair,
Strewn with untimely grey—speak, I adjure thee,
Art thou Edburga ?

*Edb.* Hush ! do not betray me.
They slew my Dritha's father in mine arms,
And they would kill her too.

*Ethelburga.* Thy Dritha ? Ah !
This pledge of sin and shame.

*Egbert.* Beseech thee, lady,
This is no place for thee. Withdraw within,
And we will bear her hence.

*Edb.* Ha ! ye 've betrayed me—
I know that voice ; it is the voice of Egbert,

The king of Wessex! He is come to judge me—
But 'twas not I—I killed not Ethelbert—
'Twas Kenred did it. And Beortric's cup,
It was not mixed for him; 'twas meant for Worr—
Ask Kenred there. Oh, spare my little Dritha,
For she is innocent—and I will die
A—a—

*Ethelburga.* A penitent, wouldst thou not say?
A humble penitent—Oh, say 't.

*Edb.* A queen! (*Dies.*)

*Ethelburga.* Edburga to the last!—Alas! alas! (*Sobs.*)

*Egb.* Nay, noble lady, let me lead thee hence;
The brotherhood, with this good dame to aid,
Will bear the body in.

*Ethelburga.* Unhappy sister!
Thy life was evil—wretched is thine end!
But thou, poor blossom of a corrupt tree, (*Taking the child.*
Must not be left to bear the bitter fruit
Native to thy bad stem. Thou shalt be Heaven's
And may thy virgin orisons wash out
The blood-red sins of thine ill-fated mother!

[*Curtain drops.*

THE END.

# Legendary and other Poems.

I.

# MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

## VERSES INTRODUCTORY

(TO FIRST EDITION, 1861).

THE grandsire doteth on the darling boy
The father doth but love. Perchance even so
'Tis but the grandsire at my heart that dotes,
And in these younglings of the brain discerns
Beauty their sire with manhood's eye undazed
Saw not, or saw but coldly qualified.
Ah! through the moonlight of autumnal years
How sweet the back-look on our first youth-world!
Freshlier and earlier the Spring burst then:
The wild-brook warbled to a sweeter tune,
Through Summer shaws that screened from brighter suns;
The berry glittered and the brown nut fell
Riper and rifer in the Autumn woods;
And Winter drifting on more glorious car,
Shed purer snows or shot intenser frost!
The young were merrier when our life was young;
Dropped mellower wisdom from the tongue of Age

And Love and Friendship were immortal things;
From fairer lips diviner music flowed;
The song was sacred, and the poet too,
Not art but inspiration was his song!
And what if Time, that through its magic tube,
Mellows and meliorates the past, hath thrown
A moonlight beauty o'er a worthless scene,
And tinsel toys sufficed an age unripe
And unfastidious, ere experience broke
Severer reason to severer joys,
Seen through that inward sense that colours all—
Not from the brain dividing, but the heart—
Show gems of genuine price?
And were they so,
And so adjudged of other eyes than mine,
Alas! what boots it now? The eyes are closed,
The hearts are cold to whom to pleasure give
Had wedded fame with bliss. Sweet to their ear
A father's—and himself a poet too—
A poet-brother's ere his fruit was ripe,
Plucked to a fameless grave, it cannot sound
A first-born's or an elder brother's praise.
Ye too are silent, best and best-beloved
Of that gay band with whom, while our fresh world
Was Eden still—this world bears curse unknown—
I trod the hallowed haunts of Academe,
And from fresh fountains drew with lip unslaked
The first sweet draught of song! My audience,
My inspiration!—rivals yet lovers still—
Ye may not listen, for long years rolled by,

Full many a spring hath flowered and winter snowed
Over your early dust, and ye are now
On earth naught but a lovely memory!
Ye too are gone, my manhood's friends, with whom
I trod the busy scene, and grappled new
With stern realities, duties, and cares,
Laborious days that task laborious nights
By the lone midnight lamp, trials that prove
And toils that ripen mind—colleagues with whom
I toiled the busy, or co-mates with whom
Enjoyed the festive hour; and tuneful Tweed
As tuneful wanders, all forgetful too,
Through that sweet vale that knows our steps no more!
And here, exhausted his tumultuous roll
Where the Atlantic in our quiet creeks
Serenes his weary wave, and Age has found
Hearth and a halting-place, amused with toys,—
So wilt thou count them keen-eyed worldling slav'st
Panting and pauseless in the sallow chase
Of vexing vanities, riches, or power,
Yet pitying all besides as vanities!—
Playing the poet in my poor domain,
Though small, yet fair as youth's fond dream designed,
To lap my life's decline—with axe or saw,
Or spade, or mattock, amid copse and cliff,
Shaping or changing, but with reverent hand
Nature's fair forms to fairer, glen and grove
And vaulted grot and vaulting waterfall,
And fountain bubbles in its rocky cave:—
Here, too, mine age-mate neighbours one by one,

And year by year, they drop, till scarce I scan
In the thronged pew when Sabbath morn comes round,
One old familiar face!—So go ye forth
With none to gratulate, and none to grieve
Your venture's voyage howsoe'er it speed,
Go without name, untrumpeted, have soothed
At fitful intervals and far, but most
When earliest, a busy life with song.

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## THE DISSUASIVE AND APOLOGY.

'But why not rather publish,' etc. etc.
*Extract from a friend's letter.*

'In the home-harvest of life's busy hours,
The fruit relinquish and retain the flowers!
The genial grain through the slow months matured
By sun and shower, abandoned when secured,
And saved the flowers sown idly by the way
With careless cast, to wile the hours of play!
Recall—reverse the fond resolve and vain,
Perish the blossoms but preserve the grain.
'Tis true, my friend, the tiller's toil was hard,
Yet was it labour brought its own reward:
The busy morn, the watch-pale night, was free
From numbing sloth, and gnawing ennui;
And as the rolling seasons came and went,
Throve but his fold with kindly nutriment,
'Twas all he cared,—he held him high content.

For them he toiled : then grudge not thou nor they,
To the tired harvester his holiday,
Labour's best physic, free from toil to rove
With song and saunter, the Aonian grove.
'But why not rather'—Nay, while Europe teems,
With Gallic fancies and Teutonic dreams,
Systems with sleight of verbal cipher bound,
That are but puzzling while they seem profound ;
Or mazed in mists of Metaphysic thought,
Doubting or darkening all, but fixing naught,—
The what is fair, what true, what right, what real,
Without, within, the actual, the ideal—
Oh, who would tempt the clueless maze of mind,
While dream-sick Europe, drugged and disinclined,
To themes like these disdainful audience yields !
Come, range the garden then, and quit the fields,
Fragrance and flowers, and melody, among,
And leave Philosophy, and listen song !

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## THE CURSE OF GLENCO.

[THE following verses are founded on a local tradition connected with the Massacre of Glenco. The main facts of that disgraceful tragedy are well known. An amnesty had been offered by Government to such of the Highland clans as had been in arms for King James, provided their chiefs should, on or before the 31st December 1691, take the oaths to William and Mary. Macdonald of Glenco, among others,

resolved to take the benefit of this Act. He accordingly proceeded to Inverlochy (or Fort-William) for the purpose of complying with its conditions. Finding, however, that the officer in command at that place was not empowered to administer the oath, he set out with all haste for Inverary, the time set in the royal proclamation having nearly expired. But the roads, or, what they then were, the mountain paths, difficult at the best, had been rendered almost impassable by a heavy fall of snow, and, notwithstanding his utmost exertions, Macdonald was unable to reach Inverary before the 1st of January. Having, however, explained the cause of his detention, the Sheriff of Argyle was, on his earnest supplication, prevailed on to administer the oath to him, taking care to state in his certificate the circumstances which accounted for the irregularity in its date. With this sufficient protection, as he deemed it, in his pocket, Macdonald returned to Glenco. But the facts having come to the knowledge of the Earl of Breadalbane, he judged this a favourable opportunity for ridding himself for ever of a political opponent and obnoxious neighbour. Having accordingly secured the co-operation of the Master of Stair (Sir John Dalrymple), then Secretary of State for Scotland, they represented to King William that the Mac-Ians of Glenco were among the most disaffected and dangerous of the Highland clans; that they were a nest of incorrigible thieves; and that their chief had not come in within the time limited in the royal amnesty—basely suppressing the accidental circumstances which had prevented compliance with the letter of the proclamation. On the faith of these representations, an order was obtained for the extermination of the Glenco men by military execution, this

order being not merely superscribed, but, what was unusual, also subscribed by the King's own hand.

A party of 120 men from Argyle's regiment was selected for carrying this order into execution. Assigning as the reason for their change of quarters the crowded state of the garrison at Inverlochy, this detachment entered the glen on the 1st of February 1692, under the command of Robert Campbell of Glenlyon, the kinsman and creature of Breadalbane, and whose niece was married to Macdonald's younger son. They were received by their victims without suspicion, and with the characteristic hospitality of Highlanders, entertained at free quarters till the 13th, when (their officers having accepted an invitation to dine the day following with the aged chief, and his sons having spent the evening at cards with Glenlyon in his quarters) at four o'clock in the morning they suddenly rose, fell on their unarmed and unsuspecting hosts, and, in cold blood, massacred thirty-eight persons, including Glenco himself, who was shot dead by a soldier while in the act of getting out of bed. Many more, including women and children, perished of cold and hunger among the mountains. And had not a fearful tempest of wind and snow retarded the march of Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton, who, with 400 men, had been directed to stop the outlets of the glen, of the male inhabitants of this devoted valley it is probable not one had escaped to report their tale.

Lindsay and Drummond, who commanded under Glenlyon, appear to have executed their savage commission with brutal ferocity. Macdonald's wife died of grief the day after the massacre; but her two sons fortunately effected their escape.

Among the remnant who survived the slaughter, was the Bard of Glenco; and a local tradition bears that, returning some time after to the scene of silence and desolation, he placed himself on one of those stupendous cliffs that close in this sublime and singular valley, whence he chanted the *Coronach* over his murdered chief and kinsmen, concluding with a solemn curse against their murderers, especially against the treacherous and unnatural Glenlyon. In his subsequent career, this last-mentioned individual having, through inadvertence or confusion of mind, allowed a soldier to be shot for whom, at the time, he had a pardon in his pocket, is said to have exclaimed, in the agony of his self-reproach, '*The curse of Glenco is upon me!*'

The Macdonalds of Glenco were styled Maclans, 'the race of John,' agreeably to a practice in use among the clans in order to distinguish them from other branches of their common name. In the following verses the Bard, under the circumstances detailed above, is supposed to speak.]

Alas for Clan Ian! alas for Glenco!
The lovely are fled, and the valiant are low!
Thy rocks that look down from their cloud-land of air,
But shadow destruction, or shelter despair!

No voice greets the Bard from his desolate glen,
The music of mirth or the murmur of men;
No voice but the eagle's that screams o'er the slain,
Or sheep-dog that moans for his master in vain.

Alas for Clan Ian! alas for Glenco!
Our hearths are forsaken, our homesteads are low!

There cubs the red hill-fox ; the coy mountain-deer
Disports through our gardens, and feeds without fear.

Thy sons, a sad remnant, faint, famished, and few,
Look down from the crags of the stern Unagh-dhu—
The voice of thy daughters with weeping and wail
Comes wild from the snows of the bleak Corri-gail.

Ye sleep not, my kinsmen, the sleep of the brave !
The warrior fills not a warrior's grave;
No dirge was sung o'er you, no cairn heaves to tell
Where, butchered by traitors and cowards, ye fell.

Ye died not, my friends, as your forefathers died !—
The sword in your grasp, and the foe at your side ;—
The sword was in sheath, and the bow on the wall,
And silence and slumber in hut and in hall.

They chased on your hills, in your hall did they dine,
They ate of your bread and they drank of your wine,
The hand clasped at midnight in friendship, was hued
With crimson, ere morn, in your life-streaming blood.

Glenlyon ! Glenlyon ! the false and the fell !
And Lindsay and Drummond, twin bloodhounds of hell !
On your swords, on your souls, wheresoever ye go,
Bear the burthen of blood, bear the curse of Glenco !

Its spell be upon you by day and by night,—
Make you dotards in council, and dastards in fight—
As you kneel at the altar, or feast in the hall,
With shame to confound you, with fear to appal ;

Its spell be upon you to shrink, when you see
The maid in her beauty, the babe in his glee !—
Let them glare on your vision by field and by flood,
The forms ye have slaughtered, the avengers of blood.

And hark ! from the mountains of Moray and Mar,
Round the flag of a King, rise the shouts of a war—
Then, then, false Clan-Dermid, with wasting and woe,
Comes the reckoning for blood, comes the curse of Glenco !

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## TO THE CUCKOO.

ON VISITING THE PLACE OF MY NATIVITY.

Hail, gentle laureate of the Spring !
Whose quaint unvaried lay
Summons the lusty woods to ring
Reveillée to the May !
My native shades, my native vale,
With thee I left, with thee I hail,
Congenial be our song !
Ah no ! To gladness and to glee
Thy song is pitched ; but not to me,
May the blithe strain belong !

Hither, the herald of the Spring,
Yearly shalt thou return,
Revisiting on filial wing
Thy birth-wood's fair sojourn

Here in the leafy lap of groves,
Whose twilight veiled thy virgin loves,
Find all thy wishes crown'd,
Find shades as deep, and mates as true,
And all thy past delights renew,
In many a vernal round!

But me, in morn's seductive dream,
Hope beckons from afar,
To tempt Ambition's turbid stream,
In fortune's fickle war.
My boyhood's Eden! vainly fair,
Ah! long without a worshipper,
Thy glens and greenwoods gay,
Shall don unsung their vernal pride,
Unsung, in Autumn, pale and pied,
Show lovely in decay!

But can the shades, and streams, and skies,
Of other lands, impart
Aught half so fair to charm these eyes,
So dear to soothe this heart?
And oh, ye mountains and ye woods!
And rocks that from the foamy floods
Shatter the showery spray!
Ye castling crags, time-worn and wild,
Nature's own masonry, up-piled
In some strange mood of play!—

Ye brakes, where from each briery nook
Their choral concert ply

The wild-wood birds, and wild-wood brook,
With song that saunters by !—
Ye sunny banks, where summer showers,
In living lapfuls, all her flowers
On beds of gayest green !
Ye glades untrodden, unprofaned,
Where Nature reigns, as first she reigned,
A virgin and a queen !—

Scenes, that instinct with life and power,
Wont, o'er my soul and sense,
To breathe in pain's, in passion's hour
A healing influence !
Scenes where my youth's untroubled spring,—
Like some clear brooklet murmuring
Through flowers in music—ran,
Farewell !—Disparadised I go
To sweat in yonder world below,
Of care, and crime, and man !

## THE SONG-SPELL.

LOQUITUR, A NORWEGIAN SCALD.

Fierce of eye, and fell of heart,
Give my foe the poisèd dart,
Ready from his hand to part,
I know a song shall stay it.

Deemster stern, and jailor grim !
Prison carcase, pinion limb—
'*Set them free.*' I know a hymn
Prevailingly shall say it.

Frenzy's fit, and faction's strife,
Hate, that dogs a neighbour's life,
Doubt, that sunders man and wife,
Song, know I, will dispel them.
Flash the lightning, drift the snow,
Ocean boil, and whirlwind blow,
Storm above, or storm below,
I know a song shall quell them.

'*Hew the traitor, limb by limb,*
*The traitor Egil Skallagrim,—*
*My son he slew :—now slay ye him—*
*Nor sword nor song shall save him.*'
He raised the song to Eric's praise :[1]—
With tuneful voice, and witching phrase,
His bosom soothes—and swells—and sways—
He wept—and he forgave him.

[1] Eric *Bloody-axe*, King of Norway, son of the famous Harald Harfaager. The triumph of song in this instance—and it is recorded as an historical fact—was the more signal in that the monarch whose son and many of whose partisans the poet prisoner Egil Skallagrim had slain, was, as his descriptive surname indicates, and as his actions sufficiently attest, one of the most cruel and vindictive of the Norwegian kings. He was—as Snorro Sturleson describes him—'a stout handsome man, strong, and very manly ; a great and fortunate man of war, but bad minded, gruff, unfriendly, and silent.'—*Heimskringla—Harald Harfaager's Saga.*

## THE MISANTHROPE'S PRAYER.

To climes afar where first the sun
Begins his daily course to run,
Or where he sets, his journey done—
For eagle's wing to flee!

From sickening scenes of busy life,
The toil, the tumult, and the strife,
Where love is rare, and wrong is rife,
For eagle's wing to flee!

From drone that dreams in learned pall,
From critic's buzz, polemic's brawl,
Where Truth is nought, and triumph all,
For eagle's wing to flee!

From Mammon's mart, where merchandise,
His cob-web craft for plunder plies,
And spiders fatten upon flies,
For eagle's wing to flee!

From crowds, where voluble and vain,
Pale Fashion schools her painted train,
To nothing feel, yet all to feign,
For eagle's wing to flee!

From Senate-hall where deepens din
Of wordy war from *Out* and *In*,
The coffer's key would keep or win,
For eagle's wing to flee!

From Bench and Bar where juggles jaw,
In venal strife with sophist saw,
And Justice yields the pass to Law,
For eagle's wing to flee!

From Courts where flattery, form, and show,
Conceal or colour all below,
The true, the false, the friend, the foe,
For eagle's wing to flee?

From Kirk or cónventicle where
Wears cant or craft devotion's air,
Or howling bigot bans in prayer,
For eagle's wing to flee!

From all these sickening scenes of life,
The toil—the tumult—and the strife—
Where love is rare, and wrong is rife,—
To climes afar where first the sun
Begins his daily course to run,
Or where he sets, his journey done,
For eagle's wing to flee!

---

## THE GLEN.

Oh, sure some nameless spirit dwells
Amid this bosky depth of dells,
And breathes a voiceless virtue round:
For as I tread the haunted bourne,
I feel a long-lost mood return,
I feel my footsteps press poetic ground!

Ye time-hewn turrets rude and rent,
The wild glen's wilder battlement!
Cliff-cradled trunks! whose fibrils bare
Stream wavering down the void in air,
Whose arms athwart, from steep to steep
Commingling, bridge the dizzy deep,
And o'er the turbid torrent's bed
A never-dawning twilight spread;
Where storming down from rock to rock
Beneath its thunder-cloud of smoke,
It writhes and raves,—till rocked to sleep
In cradling caldron dark and deep,
O'er which the hawthorn trees that blow
Shed incense-shower of odorous snow!

Thou rock-reared fortalice sublime,
That nature in her proud of prime,
In some divinely-troubled mood,
Dashed into form, and nobly rude!
Amid thy chambers dark and lone,
Tell me, what tenants hast thou known?
Till now hath mortal greeting broke
Thy dead repose of cave and rock—
Aroused the eagle from his nest—
Disturbed the dozy owlet's rest—
Ousted the wild-cat and the fox?
'Ah yes! Amid these deep-wombed rocks'
—Methinks thou answerest,—'in old time
When faith and freedom were a crime,
The martyr meek, the patriot bold,
Have found a hiding and a hold,

From pontiff's curse, from tyrant's rage,
An altar and an anchorage.'
Beneath the cloud-draped cope of heaven,
Beneath these columns earthquake-riven,
With ivy wreathèd—pillar and dome
Such as the purple pride of Rome,
Nor sculptor's art, nor architect
In living marble e'er hath decked !—
Have men who scorned to crook the knee
In idol rites sought sanctuary :
From prince or prelate's baffled quest
Found here a refuge and a rest ;
At this God-garnished shrine renewed
Their fainting faith and fortitude,
And held with heaven's all-dwelling King
Their high and holy communing.

And here for Scotland's guard, or good,
The patriot chiefs who stoutly stood,
When fickle fortune played them wrong,
When friends were false, or foes were strong,
'*Wallace the wight*,' and '*Bruce the bold*,'
Haply their biding time have told :
Amid these wonders walked and planned
Redemption for their native land :
Then like the eagle from the rock,
With lightning speed and whirlwind shock,
When time was ripe, and tide a flow,
Rushed down, and on the tyrant foe
Struck home their country's freedom-blow !

And here in fancy's trancèd hour,
Gazing on pyramid and tower,

On toppling crag, or tumbling flood,
The bard with brimming eye hath stood,
While o'er his brain in ecstasy
Came many a vision wild and high,
That roused to rapture, thrilled to fear,
Awoke the laugh—the throb—the tear—
And many a dream divinely fair
Took shape and shadowy being there,
Destined in after-time to be
A thing of immortality!

---

## LINES WRITTEN AT THE FALLS OF BRUAR IN ATHOL.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1843.

'O BE thou blest, immortal bard,[1]
And thy prevailing lay!
And he the generous chief who heard'—
May grateful pilgrim pray,
As 'neath September's burning sun,
Screened from his fiery gaze,
Through Bruar's glen, 'mid umbrage dun,
With raptured step he strays.

Where barren banks abrupt and bare
Rose o'er the dark ravine,
Responsive to the poet's prayer,
Are woodlands waving green.

---

[1] Burns;—referring to his 'Humble Petition of Bruar Water to the Duke of Athol.'

The spruce sits pillared on the rock,
The birk droops down the brae,
From cliff to crag, the fearless oak,
And rambling rowan stray.

As down the rocks with shower and shout
Wild Bruar flings his tide,
In shady linn the arrowy trout
And stately salmon glide.
For lover's tryste, for wild bird's bower,
Are kindly coverts spread,
The hare unseen, in copse may cower,
The wild deer in the glade.

So be he blest, the prophet bard
Breathed that prevailing prayer,
And he the generous chief who heard,
And robed a scene so rare!

* * * * *

Yet be a humbler bard forgiven,—
Where Bruar hurls his flood,
Through reeking rocks his rage has riven—
Confessed a sterner mood.

Not this the spot for 'loving pair
By loving stealth to meet;'
Or birds to witch the vernal air
With wild notes warbling sweet.
The cataract's roar would drown their song
These caverns dim and drear,

That black abyss would maiden young
Appal with mystic fear.

To fancy's eye more wild and stern
Far other visions rise—
The hunted chief ; the ambushed kerne
Couched till the daylight dies.

* * * * *

Where rended rocks with yawnings wide
O'er pools unfathomed lour,
There made the outlaw regicide[1]
His unapproachèd bower.

Yon ledge that spans the torrent-flood
A fearful footing gave
Where, nursing stern his vow of blood,
He skulked in Athol's cave.

---

[1] NOTE.—'The outlaw regicide.' The allusion here is to the murder of James the First of Scotland, at Perth, on the night between the 20th and 21st of February 1436. The principal actor in this tragedy was Sir Robert Græme. Before his commission of the murder, and while under sentence of outlawry, Græme lurked for some time in the wilds of Athol, concealed by the King's uncle, Walter, Earl of Athole, and his grandson, Robert Stewart, both of whom were concerned with him in the plot for the assassination of their royal relative. For the supposition in the text, however, that the Glen of Briar was the actual hiding-place of the regicide, the author has no warrant beyond its own obvious adaptation for such a purpose, as a place of retreat and refuge to a proscribed and desperate man. The 'martyr maiden' referred to in the penultimate stanza, was Catherine Douglas, one of the Queen's ladies, who for a short time obstructed the entrance of the murderers by the heroic expedient of thrusting her arm into the staple of the King's chamber door, the bolt having been treacherously removed, and the lock damaged, by the conspirators. She escaped with life, but her arm was broken.

The torrent's roar, the eagle's scream,
This savage lone retreat,
To feed that fell manslayer's dream
Was never scene so meet!

And see! o'er Tay flashed sudden out,
The midnight torches' glare!
Hark! 'tis the outlaw's triumph-shout
Startles the still night air!
The crashing door—pale on the floor
The martyr maiden bleeds.
Her mangled form remorseless, o'er,
The traitor-tempest speeds!
Unrobed—unrescued—in his bower,—
The deadly daggers ring!—
Ah! woe for Scotland's evil hour,
And Scotland's poet-king!

## TO MY COPSE-CUTTERS.

Ay, clear that jungle, root and spray,
That free the brook and breeze may play,
Thorn, alder, birch, clear all away;
Spare but the bonnie rowan-tree!

From the bold brow of yonder rock,
With axe and mattock, stem and stock,
Sweep cumbering ash and crowding oak,
But spare the bonnie rowan-tree!

And as ye drain that swampy dell,
And midway scoop the bubbling well,
From near its brink the brushwood fell,
Spare but the bonnie rowan-tree!

And when with pick-axe and with spade
Ye shape to lawn this copsewood glade,
Be tree and sapling prostrate laid,
All but the bonnie rowan-tree!

So many a throat from many a spray
Shall yield you tuneful thanks in May,
Their harvest feast to furnish gay
Have spared the bonnie rowan-tree!

In spring, when show its blossom-flowers
Like tufts of snow amid his bowers,
And his quaint song the cuckoo pours
To greet the bonnie rowan-tree;

Or down his rocks, in autumn, spread
The dangling clusters ripe and red,—
The bard will bless his gentle head
Hath spared the bonnie rowan-tree.

Nor witch nor warlock's evil spell
Against his bowers shall ever tell,
They wot, I trow, that brood of hell,
Ye spared the blessed rowan-tree!

## LINES WRITTEN ON THE BANKS OF THE WYE.

AUGUST 23, 1847.

My heart is old, my blood is cold,
My fancy's fount hath run to dry,
Or ne'er thy banks, their charms untold,
My steps had left, romantic Wye!

Or ne'er on that proud specular steep,[1]
Surveys from far thy roving flood
Through many a vale of beauty sweep,
Had I a songless gazer stood :—

Or mused all mute on Longstone's shaft,[2]
That secular stone of wonder stands
To mock the Egyptian's cumbrous craft,
A pyramid not built with hands :—

Or Lancaut stretching huge and hoar[3]
Like city towered and tenantless,
While far beneath, his sylvan shore
Wye scoops to dells of loveliness :

---

[1] Symond's yat, five miles by water above Monmouth, where the bolder scenery on the Wye terminates, and whence is commanded a magnificent prospect over Herefordshire and the Malvern Hills on one side, and the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire on the other.

[2] Longstone. This stupendous column forms part of the range named the New-weir rocks. It is composed of one enormous shaft of stone towering abruptly and apart, midway the declivity, towards the river, with an effect at once sublime and singular.

[3] Of the various ranges of rock which give so bold and peculiar a character to the scenery on the Wye, looking at a distance like vast rows of castellated streets deserted, the Lancaut cliffs opposite Piercefield Park are perhaps the most striking. At one spot, within the loop formed by

Or swept by lordly Benigar
  Looks o'er fair Tintern's ivied walls;
Or stood on Wyndcliff's dizzy scaur;
  Or roamed grey Chepstow's ruined halls.

But from my heart all waned and worn,
  Though wells the blood with fainter flow,
Nor songs, of teeming fancy born,
  Give ready voice to joy or woe—

Not yet, not yet, that heart so old
  Such charm hath lost its spell to please;
And never creep that blood so cold,
  It will not glow 'mid scenes like these!

---

## MAY.

RETURNING TO THE COUNTRY.

A——! now the merry month of May
  Doth woo me to thy copse-crowned cliffs again;
The primrose greets me on the sunny brae,
  The cuckoo hails me from the deep wood-glen:
  Sorrel, and starwort, and anemone,
  Eyebright, and hyacinth, and violet,
  On every bank are set,
And heaven and earth make song: 'tis summer's reign.

---

the river as it retires from this range, and sweeps along the opposite (the Piercefield) side, there is a sloping green peninsulated farm, as lovely a nook as ever fiction created, or fancy conceived:—

Iste terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.

Winter farewell!—farewell the toils that trace
The midnight furrow on the manly brow,
Defraud life of its autumn, and replace
The rose of summer with untimely snow!
Farewell, not scorned, ye silent hours! that sow
The seed of power to bless life's either scene,
The lowly vale unseen,
Or sunbright steep, where fame's own laurels grow.

Farewell the laurelled living and the dead!
Farewell the dumb philosophy of books!
And welcome Nature! welcome in their stead,
The vocal teaching of thy birds and brooks!—
The dreams of idle fancy in the shade,
In her wild mood interpreting
The language of the birds that sing
After May showers, from forth their nested nooks!

---

## WRITTEN IN D——S WOOD.

O LOSE me in the labyrinth of walks
That part and meet, threading in mystic maze
The lone-long limits of this Druid wood,
Where art, a-love with frolic nature, plays;
Now winding by some rock-bound solitude
Where from her clefts the mimic echo talks,
Now by some fresh and fairy-haunted glade
That offers choice of sun or shade,
Grey glen, or daisied slope, or furzy thicket rude.

Where'er they lead, it boots not, I pursue—
To sun-smit crag, clear stream, or dim recess,
Since the sweet error shall but fancy bless,
With change of charm and inspirations new!
Where yon uxorious beeches overbrood
  The green, clasped lovingly, and overhead
In merry moil pursuing and pursued,
  The squirrel gambols through his realm of shade,
How sweet amid the crimson-tufted thyme
  On mossy day-bed, to revolve or rear
Romantic fable, or heroic rhyme,
  Or tragic tale doth purge the soul by fear!
Swift were the day and sweet the hours, I ween,
Tasked on such theme did speed in such a scene!

---

## LINES TO A VILLAGE BEAUTY.

O FAIREST of the village train!
  That show'st a blooming waste of charms:
Did fate the russet robe ordain,
  Thou, only thou, shouldst bless mine arms.

But must that form—and form so rare
  What sculptor shaped, what poet feigned?
In sordid hut, on sordid fare,
  In some rank boor's embrace be strained?

Oh! I were blest for thee to bide
  The summer's sun, the winter's rain;

Like him did watch—to win his bride—
His flocks on Padan-Aram's plain:—

So when the weary day was by,
And gloaming veiled the trysting-tree,
On Hope's light pinion I might fly,
And give love's chosen hour to thee:

So to thy bosom's quickened beat,
Should wake that fair cheek's fairest hue,
The whispered tale I might repeat,
Repeated oft, yet ever new:

So, through each tingling fibre sent,
Love's balmy seal, the long-drawn kiss,
While soul with soul commingling blent,
On those soft lips I might impress:

So—but the wish, the dream was vain—
A hut must home an angel's charms;
But were I of the village train,
Thou, only thou, shouldst bless mine arms!

---

## COMPARATIVE BEAUTY.

Ay, she was fair, that high-born dame,
In purple and in pall,
And well that stately step became
Her form in lordly hall.

And she is fair, this mountain maid,
Like fawn in forest free,
In russet robe and rustic braid
Is bounding o'er the lea.

And dost thou ask which of the twain
Had challenged beauty's prize?
A sophist's question void and vain!
And thus the Muse replies:—

The woods are fair, whenas the spring
The green leaf bids to blow;
And they are fair when blossoming
With tufts of winter snow.

The brook is fair when singing free
Its mountain glens among;
And fair when flood-like to the sea
It rolls in state along.

Wild flowers are fair in wild-wood dell,
Primrose and violet;
The queenly dahlia pleaseth well,
In art's trim terrace met.

The time—the scene—the changing bent
Of musing and of mood,
'Twixt things so fair will accident
The palm of pulchritude.

## LINES WRITTEN IN A HIGHLAND GLEN.

"

Sweet sylvan change of rock and shade
No clansmen sworn on mortal feud,
With startling footstep now invade
The Sabbath of thy solitude :—
But, whistling from the neighbouring steep
The plaided shepherd plies his toil,
Hounds from afar his truant sheep,
Then hastes him to the nutwood spoil ;
But, blending wild from scaur to scaur
The bleat and bark re-echoed ring,
Or rustles through the void afar
The winnowy ply of woodland wing ;
But, round his airy parapet,
The eagle wheels from rock to rock,
That as in mocking mood repeat
The distant woodman's weary stroke ;
But deep amid the dell below
Is heard unseen the brattling brook,
Now hoarse and high, now soft and slow,
Churming by many a fairy nook !

Sweet sylvan change of bank and brake !
Never may harsher step intrude,
Never may ruder sound awake
The echoes of thy solitude,
Than step of sauntering shepherd boy,
Or bard that haunts the lone wood glen,

Or rustic maiden stealing coy,
To meet her trysted love at e'en;
Than bird on warble, or on wing,
Or bee that booms from flower to flower,
Or busy brook a-murmuring
The livelong day by bight or bower!

---

## THE CASTLES OF INDOLENCE.

I.

In the green circle of this mid-wood glade
With virgin flowers of every hue and scent,
By May's own finger sprent,
O'er the fresh glebe in rich embroidery laid,—
Lulled by the mystic murmur of the wood
That leaf-enwalls this world of solitude,
With drooping lid, and limb recline, how sweet
The gentle god to greet,
And bar each thought that stirs the slumbering blood!

II.

Ocean of shade! how deathlike thy repose!
Here rock-born Echo's self but shoots around
A stillness more profound,
From wing that flutters or from brook that flows!
O blest whom Heaven his fainting noon allows
To wear beneath this verdurous vault of boughs,

By the low music of the far-heard stream
Soothed to diviner dream
Than aught that earth or earth-bound worldling knows!

III.

Ambition, Avarice, and Love begone!
The legion-wrinkles on your front declare
Indwelling care
Doth home your several bosoms as her throne;
That hope and fear, the throe fast following throe
Of wingèd rapture and its shadow woe,
Do make eternal coil there, and exclude
Tranquillity, the good,
The only good unblent, that mortal mind can know!

IV.

Be these afar—while I beneath this tree,
The child of centuries that sweep the sky,
While birds to birds reply,
Range through the realms of fancydom with thee,
There joys unbought by labour or by care,
That leave no after reckoning of despair,
There bloodless laurels, and unenvied state,
At will's own bidding wait,
And turn to rude whate'er on earth seems rare!

## LINES WRITTEN ON RE-VISITING THE FALLS OF MONESS, NEAR ABERFELDY (PERTHSHIRE).

SEPTEMBER 8, 1858.

TIME was, Moness! had I thus wandered long
Thy rocks, and woods, and foamy falls among,
My Pilgrim's benison had burst in song!

Though twice ten times yon beech hath strewn his mast,
A lone wayfarer since I hailed thee last,
Thou art the same, unchanged and unsurpass'd!

Thy song thou thunderest with a voice as loud;
The rocks that rib thee rise as sternly proud;
And birks as fair thy cliffs still climb and crowd!

But I, how changed! Like merle's at winter tide,
My song is hushed! my summer's flowery pride,
And autumn's mellow might, have waned and died!

And they are passed, the immemorial throng,
Have gazed these floods, have mused these woods among,
In silent trance, or tributary song![1]

But thou, in glory of perpetual prime,
Shalt be as now!—Heaven's handiwork sublime,
To wonder-witch the countless coming time!

---

[1] NOTE.—It was 'in tributary song' that one visitor, the Poet Burns, commemorated his visit to this spot. His fine descriptive Lyric, 'The Birks of Aberfeldy,' was composed, as he himself informs us, in September 1787, in the course of his journey to the Highlands, 'standing under the falls of Aberfeldy, at or near Moness.' On the bank of the ravine near Moness House are to be seen some noble beech-trees of great size and beauty.

## MORNING MIST ON DUNIQUAICH.

JUNE 23, 1860.

O BEAUTIFUL art thou in all thy moods,
Old Duniquaich! and ever-changing forms!
Robed in the glory of thy summer woods,
Robed in the grandeur of thy winter storms.

But ne'er to me so beautiful as now,
With Heaven's own drapery of mountain mist
In wavy cincture flung o'er breast and brow,
Tossed by the wandering breezes as they list!

Now creeping slowly up the precipice,
A thin grey column of surmounting smoke;
Anon as smitten with some gay caprice,
Swathing in serpent folds a straggling rock;

Now veiling soft as with funereal crape,
Yon clump of dusky pines; in sportive chase
Now coursing madly over cliff and cape;
Now meeting, melting, in empyreal space!

Then fret not thou with yonder yawning crowd,
That drenching rains brought in this morn of June,
But in God's works, in shower, in shine, in cloud,
Find bliss and beauty in perpetual boon!

## LINES INTENDED TO BE SPOKEN AS PROLOGUE TO THE PERFORMANCE (BY AMATEURS) AT GLASGOW, JULY 1848, IN AID OF A PERPETUAL CURATORSHIP OF SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE AT STRATFORD; TO BE ALWAYS HELD BY ONE DISTINGUISHED IN LITERATURE; THE OFFICE, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, TO BE OFFERED TO MR. JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

In ancient times when glorious Greece bore sway
In arts and arms, the Albion of her day,
Could some fond finger, pointing to his hearth,
Proclaim, ''Twas here Mæonides had birth,
Here was his cradle—toils and triumphs by,
Here came at last the blind old man to die.'
Oh with what pride had sage, had poet knelt,
Beneath the roof where mighty Homer dwelt,
Worshipped each relic as a thing divine,
The house a temple, and the hearth a shrine!
And lo! from every land, from every sea,
Troop pilgrim crowds to fair Parthenope,—
Left unregarded all thy wonders, Rome,—
To gaze and glow at Virgil's honoured tomb!
Sacred from change see proud Arezzo keep
The home that hushed her Petrarch's infant sleep:
From change Ferrara fence the modest cell,[1]
Where Ariosto wove his wizard spell:

[1] NOTE.—'From change Ferrara fence the modest cell,' etc. The Poet's own inscription for the house at Ferrara in which he lived and died is well known;—

'Parva, sed apta mihi, sed nulli obnoxia, sed non
Sordida, parta meo, sed tamen domus, ære.'

As relics[1] shrined in consecrated spot,
See Tasso's cradle, and see Raphael's cot.
And shall thy sons, on whose world-circling sway
Ne'er sets the summer, and ne'er sinks the day—
Millions in every clime who own the tongue
In which thy Shakespeare thought, thy Shakespeare sung,—
Shall they who know where drew his earliest breath,
Our more than Homer, where his last in death,
Profaned to vulgar uses, or forgot,
A common ruin yield that hallowed spot?
Britain forbid!—forbid so foul a brand
Should stamp for scorn thy Shakespeare's father-land.
From Vandal's touch, from time, from tempest's rage
Be his hearth sacred still, from age to age,
A nation's care, a wide-world's pilgrimage!

There youthful genius where great Shakespeare trod
Shall find his call and own th' inspiring god;
There, musing mindful of the mighty dead,
Shall statesmen, orators, and sages tread,
And while they ponder on his matchless line—
Where wit with wisdom strives, and both divine,—
High thoughts shall trance them, and high fancies feast,
The house a fane, a poet for its priest.

Ah! yes, a poet for its priest; how meet!
And needs the actor too?—in both complete,
See Nature boon to your own Knowles impart
The Poet's fancy, and the Actor's art.

[1] Tasso's cradle is still shown at Sorrento,—as is the humble dwelling at Urbino in which Raphael was born.

Here, where kind hearts his merits prompt to scan,
Admired the poet, as they loved the man,
Fanned his first soarings with their fond acclaim,
Nerved his young wing, and cheered him forth to fame,—
Not here, not here, fair daughters of the Clyde!
Our plea for genius shall be coldly tried;
No spur needs here, to willing hearts that yearn
To cast their stone on Shakespeare's hallowed cairn!

And oh! count mockery the barren aid
Would starve the living and endow the dead!
Discreetly generous be it yours to yield
Due meed to both; from shameful ruin shield
On Avon's bank that consecrated dome,
Give Shakespeare honour and give Knowles a home!

---

## THE BEAUTIFUL,

### EMOTION, NOT INTUITION.

Beauty triumphant, 'reigns and revels' here,
In all her forms of smiling or severe,
In rare accord, and with a spendthrift's hand,
Blending the wild, the graceful, and the grand!

That nestling nook, so lone, so still, so green,
Tufted with fern, and bowered in birchen screen,—
That foamy brook hurled headlong to the dell
O'er clefts and crags the painter loves so well,—
That weird ravine, mysterious, dark, and drear,
The poet's worship, and the peasant's fear,

Where bandits burrow, or where demons dance,
As superstition pictures, or romance,—
Yon towering mass whose time-notched summits rise
As scorning earth to kinder with the skies,—
All, all, how beautiful!
How sweeps a train
Of swarming fancies o'er the glowing brain,
As each, as all, with varying influence,
Reach the throned spirit, through the porch of sense,
Stirring its depths with movements of delight,
That are not shape, or sound, or hue, or height,
Sensations sole—but born of thoughts that wed
The pulse of life with matter mute and dead,—
Passion, and power, to sense invisible,
That o'er the tranced soul throw the poet-spell,
Dream-rapt, transforming to sublime or fair,
What the brute ruminant's incurious stare
Beholds unmoved, unmoved the clown who sees
But that dead mass of stones, and streams, and trees,
Dumb, and devoid of symbol-sign to move
The living chords of sympathy and love.
But though the mind thus over matter throw
The charm of life, the glory and the glow,
With its own Wonder, or Delight, or Dread,
Impregning what is passionless and dead,
Not a like charm in nature or in art,
Will the same sights or sounds to minds impart.
Some, pastoral uplands, some the fruitful farm,
Some, boundless wastes and wildernesses charm,

By rocks and waterfalls the painter roves :
The poet seeks the solitude of groves ;
The scene unchanged, to changeful seeming hued
Seen by the gazer through the gazer's mood.
For Guilt or Grief the landscape smiles in vain ;
What gorge or glen is picturesque to Pain ?
And vainly to the wounded spirit show
Their glorious peaks Llanberis and Glenco !
That sterile stretch of moorland is to thee
So dull and commonplace, is fair to me :
Sweet sounds the murmur of its mossy rill,
And beautiful though bleak its bounding hill ;
That lone grey rock, that solitary yew,
With life instinct, is rife with beauty too :
Around them flit the ghosts of other years,
The sports, the songs, the transports, and the tears :—
The dead are living, and the old are young,
Age-slackened limbs to feats of frolic strung,
And not a hawthorn nods, or streamlet strays,
But lives, and tells its tale of other days.
Forms of the lost are there—a sacred throng—
There the first memories of love and song :—
I see the scene with other eyes than thine,
The lights of mind o'er senseless matter shine—
Preach as thou wilt of commonplace and dull,
There was I born, that scene is beautiful !
And oh, if mind thus over matter throw
Its own reflex of gladness and of woe,
At will to print on its dead features, free,
The stamp of beauty or deformity,

Teems not the beautiful in every clime
For him profuse, profusely, the sublime,
Who, as he roams life's varied maze abroad,
In all beholds the ever-present God,
Beholds and loves, and worships, and admires,
Feeding from matter's forms devotion's fires!
In thunder, tempest, and tornado's might,
In Hecla's heat, and Himalaya's height,
In morning's brightness, and in midnight's gloom,
In the Spring's freshness, and the Summer's bloom,
In Autumn's riches, and in Winter's rest,
Wisdom and power and goodness reads impress'd,
And over all, where'er his footsteps rove,
Inscribed supreme, unbought, unbounded love,
Grateful, on earth a Father's steps to trace,
And in the azure infinite of space,
The myriad mansions of His dwelling-place!

END OF MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

## II.

# LEGENDARY POEMS AND BALLADS.

---

## THE VOW IN GLENTREUIL.

### A LEGEND OF THE BRUCE.

I.

BAFFLED the fell pursuit of Lorn,
And foiled the sleuth-hound's savage chace,
A hunted outlaw wan and worn,
The King hath found a resting-place,
A while his weary step to stay,
With Edward Bruce and Delahaye,
Douglas, and Boyd, and stout Sir Neil,[1]
In lone Glentreuil's loneliest shiel.

Sadly the silent meal they share—
Not that they reck in hovel mean,
Of beggar's bield or beggar's fare,
For oft their night-long couch hath been

---

[1] 'Stout Sir Neil.' Sir Neil Campbell of Lochawe, the brother-in-law of Bruce. 'The good Lord James of Douglas,' Sir Gilbert Delahaye, Sir Robert Boyd, and Sir Neil Campbell, were among the chief personal associates of the King, as they were among the bravest, most devoted, and most trusted of his friends, in all the vicissitudes of his fortune.

In mossy cavern dank and deep,
Or wild Braidalbin's wildest steep,
The heath their bed, the heaven their bield,
Their fare what brook and bosquet yield. ''

A cloud is on that manly brow,
A tear is in that dauntless eye :
His broken band he cheers not now
With merry rhyme or legend high,
As erst the weary hours to wile
At Brandyr's pass, or Rachrin's isle,
Or when they lodged, by Lomond's wave,
With wild goats in Craigrostan cave.

Of Oliver and Ferabras
He tells the knightly gestes no more ;
Or doughty deeds that fell to pass,
Of them who sieged in Egramour—
That peerless twelve—the Paynim pride
Of Lanyn and his host defied,
Till Norman Richard warned the King
To boune him to the rescuing.

'Twere idle now, with arts like these,
To feign a cheer, or wile from woes
Too fresh for minstrel's song to ease,
Too deep for minstrel's saw to close.
From good Lord James of Douglas' eye
A tear is sliding stealthily,
And hopelessness hath paled the brow
Of Edward's self, and stern Lochowe.

The dauntless Boyd and Delahaye
Can scarce unknightly grief restrain :—
But he, their stricken chief, that day,
What thoughts are thronging on his brain ?—
His slaughtered friends, his kingdom lost—
His last fond throw for freedom cross'd—
His wife, his child, his dearest all
Caged captives in the tyrant's thrall !

Three brothers, princely, brave, and young,[1]
To a foul death so foully done,
Their limbs on gate and gallows flung
To blacken in midsummer's sun !
Crawford, and Athole, and Dehay,
Fraser in glorious fields grown grey,
Seton that fought by Wallace' side,
All butchered by that homicide !

O'er breast and brain, then, marvell'st thou,
While thoughts like these were swelling high,
A cloud should dark the Bruce's brow,
A tear should dim the Bruce's eye ;
That he, the boldest of the bold,
Should feel that hour his hope grow cold,
And muse the dream of freedom o'er,
Of exile on a foreign shore ?

---

[1] 'Three brothers,' etc.—Nigel, taken in Kildrummy Castle, and hanged at Berwick ; and Thomas and Alexander, taken in Galloway, and hanged at Carlisle.

II.

But why a-sudden, with fixed look,
Scans he that window's cobwebbed nook,
As, through the dun and reeky air,
He spied some sight had spelled it there?
Why, as he eyes that dull green pane,
Mutters he soft, 'Again! Again!'
Then sighs, 'Alas! fond fool! resign
A task is hopeless even as mine?'

Hath grief unhelmed his mind at last?
So deemed his friends, as all aghast
They read his look. So deemed they sure
As starting from the straw-couch'd floor
He shouts with glee, 'Tis done! 'tis done!
And constancy the prize hath won.
Needful rebuke and lesson, Heaven,
By thee, dumb monitor! hath given.
I bless the teacher, hail the sign,
Be Heaven's the praise, the peril mine!'
Then kneeling low, with brand unsheathed
On high his fervent vow he breathed.

III.

'Nay, be not startled, friends! or sad,
Nor deem the Bruce is mazed or mad.
Lord James of Douglas, cast thy look
On our one window's nor'most nook,
Beneath yon rafter rude and bare,
Eboned with soot, what seest thou there?'

'Nought save a spider at his woof
That 's fixed to that same rafter's roof ;
A loathsome villain, large and strong,
See how he runs his lines along—
Tangling his cruel coil with care,
Now fixing this, now strengthening there,
Now swinging free in fearless air—
Ah ! many a frolic fly
That 's buzzing near its freedom song,
A captive in his cage ere long,
Is doomed as sure to die
As thou or I, be it our case
To fall in Edward's grasp of grace !'
'Nay, Douglas, nay,' the Bruce replies ;
''Tis a brave insect, wight as wise !
He hath a lesson read,
For which I am his thanksman sworn :
Which English Edward long shall mourn :
And many a Scottish maid,
As gaily with her birch or broom,
In lowly cot, or lordly dome,
She plies her task—with loving care,
For Bruce and Scotland's sake, will spare
In window nook, or raftered roof,
And sacred hold the spider's woof !

* * * *

The gloom that on my spirit fell,
As on that wretched couch I lay,
To you were needless task to tell—
Ye shared my fortune's evil day.

In Scotland's cause I judged it vain
To blood my baffled brand again ;
Resolved to tempt my fate no more,
A pilgrim on the hallowed shore
My Saviour's feet had trod before,
I thought my weary bones to lay,
And wash with earnest tear away,
The sin wherewith hot blood and pride[1]
In holy roof my soul had dyed.
From vow half-formed my thoughts awhile
Were spell-drawn by yon insect's toil,
As baffled long, with patient skill,
He plied a task did foil him still.
Six times on that black rafter's roof
He strove to fix his wavering woof :
Six times it failed, the flimsy stay,—
The loosened hammock swung away,
His airy lodge a ruin lay !
Six times undaunted, unsubdued,
The hopeless labour he renewed—
Six times in vain ! the hold unsound,
Hurled the poor workman to the ground.
Methought 'twas very stubbornness—
I bade the foolish insect cease
A task was hopeless even as mine :—
But he, the braver heart !
A seventh time spun his cordage fine,

[1] 'The sin wherewith hot blood and pride,' etc. The slaughter of Sir John Comyn in the church of the Grey Friars at Dumfries.

And with a master's art,
Reviewed his work, refixed his line—
Then with triumphant dart,
Secure that all was firm and strong,
He shot the steadfast cords along!

And Douglas! shall that insect mute,
For his unreasoned end,
Six times with purpose resolute
With fortune's foil contend,
While I,—a man, a king, who fight
In heaven's own cause, 'gainst wrong for right,
For freedom and for freeman's life,
My native land, my child, my wife,—
Shun me like sluggard, faint and soft,
To bide my fortune's baulk as oft?
Nay, it were sin, and stain, and shame,
On manhood's brow, on Bruce's fame!
Then, noble insect! schooled by thee
What guerdon waits on constancy,
Once more my brand I here dis-sheath,
And swear, while I have blood and breath,
While Scotland holds a cave,
Its blade in scabbard ne'er shall rust,
Till Scotland's foe lards Scotland's dust,
Or Bruce hath found a grave!'
'Amen!' upstarting, Edward cried,
'Thy vow is mine whate'er betide.'
The Douglas knelt by Bruce's side,
'The tender and the true'—

Lochowe, and Delahaye, and Boyd,
Cam'skennet's oath renew ![1]

IV.

The vow was pledged for Scotland's weal
That hour in lone Glentreuil's shiel,
Lover of Scotland! wouldst thou know
If false or faint hearts swore it?—Go,
Con their brave story in the page
Of reverent Barbour, soothfast sage;
Or bound on patriot pilgrimage
Thy fervent footstep turn
Where Striveling's towers and temples gleam;—
By Tay of Bruce and freedom dream;—
By Loudon's hill, or thy proud stream,
Immortal Bannockburn!

---

## THE MAIDEN'S TOWER.[2]

As flies the summer sea-bird,
It shoots that light caïque,
Across the flashing Bosporus
The farther shore to seek.

---

[1] 'Cam'skennet's oath,' etc., a solemn oath (*magnum juramentum tacta sacra eucharistica*) was taken in Cambuskenneth Abbey, September 9th, 1306, a few months after Bruce's Coronation at Scone, by Sir Gilbert Delahaye, Sir Neil Campbell, and Sir Alexander Seton, to defend King Robert 'contra omnes mortales ad ultimum terminum vitæ ipsorum' (see Appendix to Scott's 'Lord of the Isles,' Note R). It is needless to remind the reader of Scottish history how faithfully they kept this oath.

This picturesque tower, seated on a narrow rock on the Bosporus, near Scutari, became subsequently the plague-hospital of the Turks. A

And now it neareth Scutari
That gems the Asian shore,
Where shower the gay acacia groves
Their blossoms' balmy store.

But onward still it dashes,
Still onward that caïque,
Still ply those gloomy rowers
Their oars for yonder creek,
Where o'er the blue Propontic,
The Lazar's deadly bower,
Upon its rocky headland,
Upshoots the Maiden's Tower.

Is stilled the shout of laughter,
Is paled the ruddy cheek,
The brow of manhood changes,
To see that stern caïque
Unload its freight of Lazars
To drag their hopeless hour,
Then speed its way in silence
Back from the Maiden's Tower.

* * * *

I.

Thus answered to the Sultan,
His sayers sage and sooth :—
'*Her stars betoken danger,*
*From deadly serpent's tooth,*

more recent interest has been imparted to the spot as, in part, the scene of Miss Nightingale's humane and heroic services during the Crimean War. The Legend will be found in Miss Pardoe's *City of the Sultan*, vol. i. c. 9.

*Until her eighteenth summer*
*In full shall ended be—'*
The Sultan's only daughter,
The lovely Heyminè.

Then sudden o'er the waters
Arose a fairy bower,
Where hangs the jutting sea-rock
They built the Maiden's Tower.
She may not range the mountain ;
She may not rove the plain ;
The garden harbours danger ;
The rose may wrap her bane :
Amid Scutari's cypress groves
That maiden may not stray,
Nor seek the cool acacia's shade,
To shun the burning ray :
Where sing the thousand nightingales
He there may coil his ring,
That evil worm of destiny,
Or by the bubbling spring.

Yet gaily passed the summers
That riped her beauty's bloom ;
Nor longed she for her freedom,
Nor thought she of her doom :
For playmate meet and many
Had she to wile the hour,
The Sultan's only daughter,
Within her Maiden's Tower.

And many a gilded galley
And many a gay caïque,
With Bey, and Khan, and Pasha,
Shot daily past that creek,
With Zebecque and with Tambourine,
They haunt the summer sea,
To wile the glance of favour
From lovely Heyminè.

* * * *

II.

With joy from Dolma Batchè
The Sultan's o'er the sea,
To-morrow is her birth-day,
To-morrow she is free.
Are clouds of pennons dancing
O'er the glad Propontine,
To sound of drum and dulcimer
And merry mandoline.

For many a turbaned Emir
Is there, and holy Sheikh,
And many a Pasha's triple plume
Streams from his carved caïque.
And barge on barge is laden
With gifts from every land,
From gallant Prince and Pasha
Would win that lady's hand.

Perfumes are there from Iran,
And gums from Araby,

The costly shawls of Cachemire,
And Bagdat's broidery :
And jewelled rings and armlets,
And silken anteries,
With pearls and rubies powdered,
And diamond necklaces.

These jewels sends brave Mustafa,
Who guards the Dardanelles ;
These Seyd, the Druse and Maronite
On Lebanon that quells ;
That gem-encircled mirror,
To hold in lady's hand,
Sends Omar from Damascus :—
These pearls from Samarcand.

Are precious stones in casket
From Ind and Barbary—
'But who hath sent this basket ?'
Exclaimed fair Heyminè—
'So chastely simply beautiful,
It mocks, methinks, to shame,
These costly gauds of vanity—
I marvel whence it came.'

Within nor gem nor jewel,
Nor aught was there to find,
Save fairest flowers in posies,
And fruits of rarest kind :
And on a scroll this legend—
'These Azim sends to thee,

Thy beauty's meetest emblem—
No other wealth has he.'

O fairer than his roses,
It flushed that maiden's cheek;
For from her lattice secretly,
Oft in his swift caïque,
Her sigh had followed Azim,
O'er the Propontic wave,
The Sultan's poorest Pasha,
The bravest of his brave.

* * * *

III.

Amid her silken ringlets
One fragrant flower she 's placed;
Another in her girdle,
A third upon her breast:
Then thrust her ivory fingers small,
Amid that garner green,
To snatch a luscious fig ensconced
Within its leafy screen.

O wildly shrieked that maiden,
And loud for agony,
Alone within her chamber
The fated Heyminè;
And when the Sultan entered
His daughter's form was cold,—

And round her wrist an adder
Entwined his deadly fold.

The Sultan's house is childless,
His harem's halls are gloom—
Upon the breach at Belgrade,
Hath Azim found a tomb—
And wisely had they read the stars
Who spaed her destiny,
The Sultan's only daughter,
The lovely Heyminè.

---

## THE REIVER'S REDE.

Thou rugged mass whose mural pride
Has mocked the torrents' frothing tide,
That wrestling 'gainst thy rocky side,
Through depths of untold time,
In forceful flood, or mining flow,
Has vainly toiled to overthrow
Thy barrier-bound sublime!

Nurtured the oozy rifts between,
Ye ivied oaks! grotesque and green,
That dangling in 'mid air, o'erscreen
This uncouth hermitage,
Or straggling down the rock's rough brow,
Like sparse locks on the forehead show
Of many-wrinkled age!

Voice of the desert—hermit flood!
That wimpling wild, or thundering rude,
Wanderest this mountain solitude,
Woke by none other sound—
Save eagle's scream, or sheep-dog's bay,
The long lone bleat, or the chance lay
Of shepherd on his round—

A poet's hail!—They fade amain
The silky lordling, sullen swain,
That haunt the city, haunt the plain,
A race of downward years,—
While these unchanging wastes among,
Chieftain and clan, with shout and song
Rush to the strife of spears!

As the eye sweeps o'er mount and moor,
What legends wild, traditions hoar,
My wondering childhood's cherished lore,
Start fresh from memory's cell!
Mark'st thou where most 'mid yonder moss,
Their plumes of snow the Cannachs toss,
List, to what there befell.

I.

The raid is o'er; the spreath is won—
With noisy rowte of bull and beeve,
Lifted from Lowland dale or dun,
That morn,—I trow but law or leave,—

From the fat holms of Teith and Forth,
Macgregor and his merry men
By mountain passes to the north
Are wending to Glenlyon glen.

'Hurrah! hurrah! we 're safe at last—
The fatal moss of Leny's pass'd,
And wizard's rhyme and rede forgot,
Of feud or foe I reck me not.
Then on, then on, my merry men!
Or ere the moon be up again
Our beeves must see Glenlyon glen.'

But dark and deep, with sudden sweep,
The mist rolls down o'er strath and steep!—
With bootless ban and wildered brain
In weary coil the reivers strain
To make Drumardach's pass.—In vain!
'Tis mirk midnight at noon of day—
They 're treading back their morning way!

A live-long hour they toil.—But hark!
A shepherd's call, a sheep-dog's bark.
'Where be we here?' the chieftain cried,
'In Leny moss,' the youth replied.
'In Leny moss!' Ah! then I ween
Could that proud chieftain's cheek be seen,
Its hue took change, as grasping stern
His broad claymore, he spake the kerne,

'My merry men! with brand and bow,
Prepare ye for the coming foe;
Macgregor's mortal hour is come,
The moss he treads must be his tomb.

So redd me an uncanny man,
In the wise city Paduan,
As in my youth I dared to fee
His midnight bower of gramarye.
"Fair, high, and late (so ran the saye),
The stars thy destined dole assure,
If ne'er betide thou lose thy way,
When it is neither night nor day,
Nor starless morn, nor gloaming grey,
Amid the moss of Leny moor."
So redd my rede that wizard wight;
But redd he sooth, or redd he not,
Though it be neither day nor night,
And I am in that fated spot—
Come foe, come fiend, I bide my lot!'

II.

The mist is on the ebb of tide,
In wavy waftage to and fro,
Drawn slowly up the mountain's side,
Its cloudy curtains furl, and show
Emerging moss, and rock, and stream,
Seen dim as in a morning dream.

'Cheer up! cheer up! my merry men!
Ben-Voirlich doffs his cowl again,
Now speed we for Glenlyon glen.
But, Saint Maronnoch! yonder rock
Bears it a grove of moving oak?'
'Nay, brother, nay; the wood it bears
Is all alive, its branches spears.'
And lo! and lo! a gallant show,
With shout and cheer an armed clan!
By plaid and pibroch may you know
The men of Leny's vale below,
The fair-haired race of Anselan.

* * * * *

III.

I may not sing that bloody fray
Of Anselan's and Alpin's race,
I may not tell what maidens gay,
That dulesome day left lemanless;
What mothers' moan, what widows' wail,
Through Lyon's glen, through Leny's vale,
Was wafted on the morrow's gale!
I may not tell how, recking nought
The wizard's weird, Macgregor fought;
Beneath his claymore broad and bright,
Baptized in many a mountain feud,
Beneath his arrow's deadly flight,
What foemen with their warm life's blood
That day their native heath bedewed;

Till with his twin-born brother brave,
The last that stood that mortal stoure,
He dree'd his weird, and fills his grave
Where tufted cannachs thickest wave
Amid the moss of Leny's moor!

---

## THE ASH-TREE WELL.

[The following ballad forms a sequel to the preceding poem, 'The Reiver's Rede;' and the tragic incident which it narrates rests on a well-authenticated local tradition. The Well remains, but the fine Ash-tree, which, though much decayed, still continued to spread its branches over it in the author's schoolboy days, has long since disappeared.]

Saw'st e'er so fair a fountain?
From basin bubbling full,
Still brimming o'er its rough stone ledge,
Its waters clear and cool!
Its velvet verge to fence it,
From wandering cattle's tread,
Some reverent hand had faced with flags,
Fetched from the near brook's bed.

That mountain brook that babbles
So noisy now, and loud,
And hurls at Lammas, down its glen,
A torrent fierce and proud;

When blows the blasting east in May,
Or summer droughts are come,
Is drained to dry, or dwindles
To tiny dub, and dumb.

But drought or frost, this fountain,
No change its waters know;
Still calm and cool, and clear and full,
They ever fill and flow.
Through spinning sands for strainer,
Its conduit evermore
Boon Nature feeds and filters,
From many a bursting pore.

There 's but one thing it lacketh,
This fount of faërie,
To win the wanderer's benison,—
The bield of bush or tree,
Where, quenched his thirst, and canopied
When smites the raging ray,
The pilgrim, pleased, might linger
Upon his weary way.

'See'st thou where on its margin
It heaves that massy mound?
It marks where cast an ancient Ash
Its giant arms around;
Ah! well do I remember
The wasted trunk stood there;
Its blasted bole, its skeleton
Of branches, bony bare.

And spell-bound oft I lingered
Beside the Ash-tree spring,
Nor dared my schoolboy's thirst to slake,
So near accursed thing.'

* * * *

The fight is done; the Reiver
His deadly weird hath dree'd
On Leny's moss, as soothfastly
That wizard spake his rede:—
And from his kerne their morning's spoil
Both horn and hoof they've won,
And penned them fast in fank and fold
By setting of the sun.

But who is he skulks yonder
Beside the Ash-tree well,
Nor dares the threshold's latch to lift,
Where doth a mother dwell;
Though faint with heat and hunger,
And bleeding from the fray,
The weariest man, and wofullest
Hath home returned that day?

* * * *

Of Alpin's blood was Alaster,
Though from his boyhood bred
With Anselan's clan, by yeoman stout,
His widow mother wed:

And by that yeoman stepsire's side,
His maiden shaft he drew ;—
Against his father's kith and kin
The aimless arrow flew.
But when the fight closed man to man,
Clan-Alpin's cry he cried,
And for Clan-Alpin, heart and hand,
His battle-brand he plied,
Until the brave twin-brethren chiefs
On Leny's moor lay dead,
And fast for far Glenlyon,
The reiver-few are fled.

But where shall fly young Alaster ?
Nor light his wounds nor few ;
No home hath he to welcome him,
And chill the evening dew !
Long by the well he lingers,
But hunger's fang is fell,
And loth and late, he enters blate,
Where doth a mother dwell.

Upstarts his stepsire, writhing
With rage and pain was he ;
An arrow from the reiver's bow
Still rankled in his knee.
'The man hath crossed my threshold's floor,
Or were he friend or foe,
Thereout athirst or hungered, ne'er
I bade that man to go.

As at my hearth this morning, thou
Didst break thy morning's fast,
So at my hearth this evening, make
Thine evening's meal and last.'

They laid to eat before him,
And when his meal was done,
A rope of stout horse-hair he 's ta'en,
And fast has bound his son.
In vain the frantic mother prayed,
And strove, and shrieked, and fell—
A lifeless thing swings Alaster,
Over the Ash-tree Well!

* * * *

She cursed a curse upon them,
A mother's fearful ban:
And his life long, a lameter,
He limped, that savage man.
And from that hour it withered fast,
That Ash-tree, bole and bough,
And o'er their homestead waveth rank
The horrid hemlock now!

Then marvel not that eerie thoughts
My schoolboy's step should spell,
That shrank my schoolboy's lip to slake
Its thirst at this fair Well:—
And when it swept, the shrill night-wind,
Athwart that Ash-tree bare,
Meseemed that things unearthly,
Went moaning through the air!

## LEGENDARY BALLAD.

THE bale-fires blaze—the bugles call—
  The signal speeds along—
From hill and dale, from hut and hall,
  The ready clansmen throng.

He 's donned his targe, he 's slung his bow,
  He 's grasped his massy glaive—
His bride—one kiss or ere he go
  To lead his clansmen brave.

'O go not forth, my lord, my life!
  O go not forth, I pray—
Thy clansmen true will staunch the strife,
  O go not forth to-day!

'Last night a fearful dream I dreamed:
  Yon oak that shades the lea,
Pride of an hundred summers, seemed
  A blazing pile to be!

'Its goodly boughs, its foliage fair,
  Its rough trunk's stately swell,
All blasted by the flame and bare,
  A crumbling mass it fell!

'Then go not forth, my lord, my life!
  O go not forth, I pray—
Thy clansmen true will staunch the strife,
  O go not forth to-day!

'Last night as by yon turret high
I stood, a blazing ball,
Shot sudden down the starless sky,
Seemed on these towers to fall.

'And downward dashed with shivering shock,
At midnight's hour amain,
A fragment from the *Dead-man's Rock*,
Lies buried in the plain.

'With sudden swell, Teith's boding wave
In-isles St. Maho's mead—
Ne'er failed that sign, when chieftain brave
Of Anselan's line must bleed.

'Last night, adown the moonless dale,
Where winds the chapel way,
The *fatal lights* with lustre pale,
By fits were seen to play.

'And slowly o'er the twilight heath,
By gifted eye were seen
With wail and woe, the train of death,
A warrior's corse between!

'Then go not forth, my lord, my life!
O go not forth, I pray,
Thy clansmen true will staunch the strife,
O go not forth to-day!'

* * * *

He 's donned his targe, he 's slung his bow,
He 's grasped his massy glaive—
His bride—one kiss—'I needs must go
To lead my clansmen brave.'

* * * *

With straining eye, with throbbing breast,
High from the castle wall,
She 's watched the east, she 's watched the west,
From morn till even-fall.

She heeded not the breeze that blew
Chill, on her bosom bare:
She heeded not the hoary dew
That gemmed her raven hair.

But vainly looks she to the hill,
And vainly to the lea!
She starts—'tis but the distant rill—
'Tis but the rustling tree.

The twilight fades, the moon shines clear,
And still her watch she keeps;
But hark!—a moan comes o'er her ear,
Of one that wails and weeps.

Ah no!—full well she knows the sound—
The sign of dule and death!
The moaning wild of startled hound,
That bays the passing wraith!

And dimly down the distance, lo!
A warrior's corse between—
With wail and woe, descending slow,
The train of death is seen?

* * * *

Where yonder birches 'wave and weep,'
O'er Teith's transparent tide,
Beneath one grassy mound they sleep,
The chieftain and his bride!

---

## A LEGEND OF O'SULLIVAN.

I.

Alas for brave O'Sullivan—
Now o'er his fallen Dunboy
It flaunts, the Saxon standard,
The banner of Mountjoy![1]
The soldier-priest,[2] they 've slaughtered him,
The psalter in his hand;

---

[1] Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, successor in the favour of Elizabeth, and in the government of Ireland, to the unfortunate Earl of Essex. He was created by James I. Earl of Devonshire, and married the sister of Essex, the beautiful Penelope Devereux, the *Stella* of Sir Philip Sidney, and divorced wife of Lord Rich, afterwards Earl of Warwick.

[2] Father Collins.

And fallen is fierce Macgeoghegan [1]
Clutching his blazing brand.
But not of foul surrender
Thought yet that remnant brave,
Nor parleyed with the Saxon foe,
Nor quarter sought nor gave,
While doorway, vault, or toppling tower,
A desperate vantage lent,
But trench, and tumbling rampart, made
Their tomb and monument.

To hide in far Tir-Owen,
A price upon his head,
And Carew's [2] blood-hounds hunting him,
The black O'Neil hath fled :—
O'Donnell [3] bends an exile's knee
At Compostella's shrine,
And homeward hies proud Aquila,[4]
Across the Biscay brine.

And where is he,—O'Sullivan,
The lord of fallen Dunboy—
And where be they, his homeless ones,
The husband father's joy ?—

---

[1] Macgeoghegan, already mortally wounded by a shower of balls, was despatched by a soldier, while in the act of applying a light to an open barrel of gunpowder.

[2] Sir George Carew, President of Munster.

[3] Red Hugh O'Donnell, the chief of Tyrconnell.

[4] Don Juan de Aquila, who commanded the Spanish force, sent in 1601 to assist the Irish insurgents during Tyrone's rebellion.

In wild Glengariff's wildest cave,
On scant and savage cheer,
They fend, the proud O'Sullivans
Of Bantry and of Bere.

The brave six score have followed him,
Escaped the Saxon's steel,
A feller foe than Saxon's sword,
The fangs of famine feel.
For swept from strath and mountain,
Nor horn, of flock or herd
Nor hoof, from Slievemish to Glenflesk,
Hath fiery Wilmot spared:
And waning woods need-'monish them
For kindlier bield to make,
Ere winter strip the berry brown
And wild nut from the brake—
Where Connemara shoulders
The huge Atlantic wave,
There, hearts their hopes that kinder,
Will venture arm to save.

* * * *

Yet danger dogs that martyr-band—
Muskerry's streams are red
With Irish blood, with Irish braud,
By false Macarthy shed,
Liscaroll's towers ope not for them—
Fierce Barry waits below,
And 'cross black Ballyhoura
Hath chased them for his foe.

Not wild Galtees! your wildness
May save that hunted flock,
Nor bleak Benduff, nor cloistered Suir,
Nor Cashel's crosiered rock:
And dark and deep, at Terry-glass
A fordless flood they find,
The Shannon broad before them,
The Saxon loud behind!

A basket-bark with osiers,
With haste each man, they twine,
And well with hide of slaughtered steed
The buoyant cradle line;
Then o'er the flood like bee-hives,
A fairy fleet they bore,
How gnashed his teeth—to see that sight—
The Saxon from the shore!

And now at Kilnalehen,
On Galway's soil they stand,
But through Clanricarde still must fight
Their way with bow and brand;
Till faint, at length, and way-worn,
A famished few they come,
Where brave O'Rourke hath welcomed them
Within his mountain home!

* * * * *

II.

But where is she, that lady
Her lord hath loved so well;
From Saxon's lance and Saxon's lust,
Where hies she safe to dwell?
And where be they those eaglets young
She loved to proudly rear,
The race of high O'Sullivan,
Of Bantry and of Bere?
List, loving hearts, what story
Hath vouched, and chronicle,
A tale that minstrel proudly
Delighteth still to tell;
A tale of loving service,
A tale of ancient faith,
How saved a vassal's noble heart
A noble house from death.

* * * *

They wonned, O'Sweeny and his boy,
In lone Glengariff, lone,
Where shivered crags in fragments huge,
By earthquake's heave o'erthrown,
With bramble, and with brier,
And bracken, matted o'er,
Defied the stranger's step would seek
That inner nook explore.
Towered overhead a precipice
That from the mountain's brow

Descending sheer, a sheet of rock,
Walled in that den below.
The eagle builds where, midway down,
One ledge outshelving grey
Juts bold.—There, else, can living thing,
Or footing find, or way.
In this wild spot that lady,
The Saxon's brand and ban
Hath laughed to scorn, here nursed the shoots
Of brave O'Sullivan.
And glad Gorrane O'Sweeny was—
Proud man was his employ—
To shield from foe and famine
The house of high Dunboy.
But ah! they fared but scantly
His boy and he before,
And how for mouths so many, now
Provide the daily more?
Glengariff's woods, that leaguered band
Have hunger-harried bare,
And pass beyond they may not,
The Saxon foe is there!
Is left nor grouse nor gorcock,
Nor cony, hare, nor roe,
Nor berry in the copse above,
Nor trout in linn below.
The salmon shared, was salted,
His winter need's supply,
Ah! where find next, his nestlings young
May hush their hunger-cry?

A livelong day with bow in hand,
All through Glengariff wide,
Through glade, and glen, and dingle,
Their forest-craft they 've plied ;
And now beneath the *Eagle's Rock*,
Their bootless quest resigned,
With heavy cheer and hopeless,
Their lagging limbs reclined.

While pondered Gorrane sadly,
The woful home was nigh,
A cry of terror startled him,
Sent sudden down the sky ;
And winnowing proud, with oary wing,
Athwart the darkened air,
An eagle to his eyrie's ledge
Conveyed a shrieking hare.
Clamoured his eaglets fiercely,
Impatient for their dole !
Then flashed amain like levin's flash
A thought on Gorrane's soul,
With hope so wild, nought but despair
A faithful heart might buoy ;
But up he started gaily,
And clapped his hands for joy !
With haste a rope he 's twisted,
Elastic, strong, and tried ;
For strands, its pliant fibre
The mountain fir supplied ;

Then sought the summit verge above,
  Wherefrom a fearless eye
Far down may on its ledgy rest
  The eagle's home espy.

Hath flown the parent eagle
  To seek another prey :—
Yet, yet, thou desperate father
  Thy desperate venture stay !
That gallant boy, thine only child,
  Should waver heart, or hand,
Or footing fail, or crossing crag
  Divide the straining strand,
A formless mass on yonder rocks
  Dim seen, far, far below,
He dies impaled.—Bethink thee
  Ere yet thou let him go !

'Tis done—'tis done ! the voyager
  Now swings in dizzy air ;
And now erect and scatheless stands
  Upon the eagle's lair !
And tightening haste, with willow-withes
  Their gorge, that glutton brood,
That but piecemeal and sparingly
  May pass thereby their food,
The signal sways—The father
  Uphoists the gallant boy,
And on the summit proudly
  Receives him, and with joy !

From far, of plying pinion
Is heard the billowy beat;
And one from west, and one from east,
Drop on their eyrie's seat
The parent birds. A cony, one
Clutched in his shrill death-shriek;
And one a glossy gorcock bore
Impaled on bloody beak.

Once more on pious mission
Flaps the unwearied wing;
They 're off to other mountains,
Another spoil to bring.
Swings down the deep that fearless boy,
And reft the reiver's prey,
Leaves but the reeking entrails
The fledgets fierce to stay.

With merry heart now homeward
They wend, that faithful pair;
And daintily and plentily
Divide the eagle's fare!
And day by day, to feed thy young,
Wild eagles on the wing,
From thine own hills, O'Sullivan,
Their punctual tribute bring;
As when the Hebrew prophet
By Cherith's brook concealed,
Ere yet he fled to Zarephath,
The ravens of the field

Brought morn and eve their duteous dole,
That safely he might dwell
From Ahab and his evil queen,
Zidonian Jezebel.

And such the tale that story
Hath vouched and chronicle,
The tale that Irish minstrel yet
Delights to proudly tell.—
A tale of loving service,
A tale of ancient faith,
How saved a vassal's noble heart
A noble house from death![1]

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## MERLIN'S TOMB.

(*First printed in the* GLASGOW UNIVERSITY ALBUM *for* 1838.)

### PART FIRST.

AH, fatal thirst! ah, fond aspire!
Forbidden things to know!
Dis-Edener thou of our first sire,
Well-spring of all our woe!

---

[1] A sequel to the above Legend will be found in the *The Book of Irish Ballads*, p. 173. It is entitled 'The last O'Sullivan Beare,'—being a lament over the fallen fortunes of his once princely house, by the sole survivor, Philip, one of the young O'Sullivans preserved in the manner described in the preceding poem. From the note prefixed by the author (Thomas D. M'Gee, it would appear that the O'Sullivan referred to in the *Legend*, and his lady, had escaped to Spain, where they died at a very advanced age, two of their four children having predeceased them. Of the other two—a son and a daughter—the latter embraced a religious life, and the former, Philip, the last O'Sullivan Beare, distinguished himself as the commander of a ship of war, in the service of Philip IV. of Spain.

The first device the tempter tried,
Thou art his favourite still,
Dost woo and win him his witch-bride,
Soul-pledged to work his will.

* * * *

King Arthur weeps in Carduel
His Merlin's mystic doom;
Sir Gawayne rides o'er down and dell
In search of Merlin's tomb.

But vain the quest: betrayed by thee,
With sinful love to aid,
In airy tower, that none may see,
Is mighty Merlin laid.

* * * *

'Sir Merlin, thou hast taught me long,
And taught me wondrous well,
The magic power of sign and song,
And necromantic spell.'

(Thus spake the Lady Viviane,
His peerless paramour,
As they in dalliance fond and fain
Lay in their forest bower.)

'And I can bid the bright noontide
Turn to a midnight gloom;
And toothless crone seem bonny bride
To mock the gay bridegroom.

'And I can tame the proudest knight,
And change to hart or hare,
And crowd with keep and castled height
The void abyme of air.

'And I can bridge the ocean stream,
On moorland waste and wild,
Bid forest wave, or palace gleam,
By silver lake in-isled.

'And I can wake aerial strain
The moping mood to cheer,
As viol, lute, orpherien,
Did mix sweet music near.

'And I can bid, with hound and horn,
The mimic huntsman ride,
With shout o'er fell and forest borne
Athwart the welkin wide.

'And I can make knight 'countering knight
Career with levelled lance;
Or dames and squires to bevy bright
In masque or merry dance.

'But there 's one thing I cannot do;
I pray thee teach it me.'
(And round his neck her arms she threw,
And kissed him coaxingly.)

'How might a lady have her still
Her lord in loving bower,

Whence he could not, save at her will,
Without or wall or tower?

'Can magic build me bower like this?
Oh, sweet, methinks, it were
In such a bower in life-long bliss
To hold thee prisoner!

'A happy bondman shouldst thou be—
A gentle jailer I—
When thou wouldst forth mine only fee—
A kiss—thy ransom high!'

Sir Merlin frowned, Sir Merlin sighed;
But as entranced he lay
By Viviane's side, his purpose died—
He could not say her nay.

Ne'er loved the Lady Viviane
It seemed so fondly well,
And long, I ween, ere morning dawn
She learned that fatal spell.

PART SECOND.

In May when flowers are springing fair,
And woods are bourgeoning,
And lusty love in earth and air
Lordeth each living thing,

Sir Merlin and his peerless make
Are wandering hand in hand,

By flowery dell and forest-brake,
Through fair Brocheliande.

They drank them of that magic fount
Renowned in minstrel song,
That gusheth from his stony mount,
Enchanted Berenton.

As by the wizard well they stood—
To prove the legend true—
Against the rock in sportive mood
Some sprinkled drops they threw.

Amain, aloud, from shivered cloud,
It dashed, the drenching shower!
Beneath a linden's leafy shroud
The laughing lovers cower.

Then gaily on their way they wend
Thorough that forest fair,
In ferny glade and briery bend
Startling the hind and hare.

With linkèd arm, in amorous talk,
They stroll the forest through,
And clasp and kiss in lone wood walk,
As loving pair will do.

Anon they reached the fairest nook
In that fair wood, a bower
O'er which a hoary hawthorn shook
Odorous its blossoms-shower.

The spot was fair, the lovers fain—
Under that hawthorn tree
Sir Merlin and fair Viviane
They took their disport free.

* * * * *

But lovers' play and summer's ray
Will medicine kindly sleep:
On Viviane's lap Sir Merlin lay,
And sunk in slumber deep.

The lady looked.—'He slumbers well'
(She thought, Ah, woe the hour!)
'Now is the time to prove my spell,
My spell of wondrous power!'

Gently Sir Merlin's head she 's placed,
And slowly on the ground;
Then, muttering, with her wimple traced
A ring the hawthorn round.

Nine times that magic ring she made,
Nine times that spell she spoke,
Then on her lap the slumberer laid;—
But when Sir Merlin woke

He looked a-wild, he looked a-long
Upon his prison-bower:
It seemed a castle fair and strong
Begirt with trench and tower.

Sir Merlin frowned, Sir Merlin sighed;
Fair Viviane laughed the while—

'Such fortune still must fool betide
Will trust a woman's wile!

'The fatal coil thine art hath wove
Thine art can ne'er undo!'
And long with mightiest spell she strove—
But ah! she found it true.

And there that lady fond and fair—
The Lady of the Lake—
By day, by night, will oft repair
Her sweet solace to take.

But Arthur weeps in Carduel
His Merlin's mystic doom;
And Gawayne seeks by down and dell
In vain for Merlin's Tomb![1]

---

[1] NOTE.—The above is the account which the Romance of Merlin gives of the final disappearance of the great enchanter. Other versions of his story, differing altogether in the circumstances from that adopted in the text, will be found in Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (Song v.); in Spenser's *Faërie Queene* (Book iv. ; in the *Morte Arthur* (Book iv.); and in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (Book iii.)

The Forest of Brocheliande (or Brecheliant), the scene of so many of the adventures recorded in the Round Table Romances, was in Brittany; and in the twelfth century it comprehended—as Chateaubriand in his Autobiography informs us—the districts composing the cantons of Fougères, Rennes, Bécherel, Dinan, St. Malo, and Dol. In it was situated the famous Well of Berenton (or Belenton), which possessed the rare virtue of procuring for the neighbourhood, whenever needed, a seasonable supply of rain, all that was necessary in order to this being, that any one who drank of it should, when he had done so, sprinkle some of the water on the rock whence the fountain issued.

The loss of Merlin, his counsel, and his art, was deeply felt by King Arthur. As his disappearance had been sudden and mysterious, Sir Gawayne and other knights of the Round Table volunteered their services to go in quest of him. Why their search proved unsuccessful, the preceding poem will explain.

## KING DAG AND HIS SPARROW.

For long long hours among the woods,
At Easter-tide or May-day,
I 've listened to the babbling birds,
Lone sauntering on a play-day.

Above, around, to left, to right,
Rings din unconscionàble,
As all the masons had gone drunk,
And sang away at Babel.

'Tis linnet, robin, wren, merle, thrush,
All chirp, and trill, and warble;
Here flows a gush of liquid sound,
There jerks a grating garble.

That pair is chanting in duet,—
When he has done his Pæan,
Straightway his lady-love strikes up,
And lilts in Amabæan.

But most are rattling loud and wild,
Out of all tune and season,
Like imp skips singing home from school,
And murdering rhyme and reason.

One hums a note—then flies away
Into a cosier station;
Another follows, chirp—chirp—chirp!
Does that mean assignation?

That short sharp note, was 't vixen's scold ?
That soft, was it confession ?
That flourish, was it boaster's tale ?
That melting gush, possession ?

The rascal bullfinch t' other day,
That stripped my currant bushes,
Then piped away with might and main,
As he would shame the thrushes ;

The gulls that flock at Lammas-tide,
And flap the waves yer-yerring—
I cannot make their jargon out—
'Tis something about herring.—

Something all sing, or say, I 'm sure,
But what, can ne'er determine ;
Be 't of their crop,—the grains and grubs—
Be 't scandal, song, or sermon.

That birds do talk is past all doubt ;
For holy books 'tis showed in ;
See Koran *passim*, Edda too,
Ask Mahomet, or Odin.

Mahound oft chatted with the bird
That billing loves, and cooing,
Because the Prophet was himself
A little food of wooing.

But with the raven Odin chose
To croak away and crack, sir,

A Northman grave, he liked to see
His counsellors in black, sir.[1]

There 's no disputing about tastes
In minister or marrow—
King Dag who knew the speech of birds,
To both preferred the sparrow.

A wiser king than was King Dag
They never had in Norroway,
Because his sparrow brought him news
From countries near and far away.

His people took him for a god,
Or at the least a warlock;
For tid, or tide, ne'er missed King Dag
To seize pat by the forelock.

When oats were ripe at John o' Groats',
Or foe in secret arming,
When whales were posting from the pole,
Or herring hive at swarming,

King Dag upon the Scotchman's crop,
And on the fish or foeman,
Pounced just in time—but Dag himself,
Him catch at nap could no man.

---

[1] Odin had two ravens, Huggin and Mummin, who daily brought him news from all parts of the world. When he sat down to table in Valhalla, they perched one on each side of his chair, and whispered their intelligence in his ear.

Nor man, nor mail, nor coach, nor craft
  Shoots off on steam like arrow,
Needs Dag to fetch or carry news,
  No post or spy but sparrow.

* * * *

It chanced one day, on homeward way,
  From far, his fleet newsmonger
As he flew o'er Reid-gota-land,[1]
  He felt the twinge of hunger.

Alas! that man will still be man,
  And sparrow will be sparrow—
When pleasure pleads, too oft in both
  The vision 's naught and narrow.

Yon ripe grain field—how nice it looks!
  Pops without pass or parley,
Sir Sparrow down, and pecks away
  Among the rigs of barley.

That churl—he stoops—he 's picked a stone—
  Away, thou foolish lagger!—
He 's hit his mark—Oh, were King Dag
  But here, with dag and dagger!

House-top and hedge, he 's searched and searched
  In vain for his adviser—

[1] Reid-gota-land, included in the district between the Vistula and the Gulf of Finland.

His oracle is dumb—King Dag
Will never be no wiser!

A Finland witch he 's fee'd. Witch herbs
She 's burnt on Swegder's barrow;
Then sang her spell—and through the reek
King Dag beholds his sparrow

Heels up, a-dangle from a pole,
In barley field at Varva—
A spectacle to warn all birds
Will rather steal than starve a'!

By Odin he hath sworn his oath,
And eke by Thor's big hammer,
There should be left on Varva farm
Goodman alive, nor gammer!

Sheep, oxen, pigs, he 's swept them off,
Burnt house, barn, cart, plough, harrow,
Man, woman, child, he slew them all
For slaying of his sparrow.

And now he 's ta'en Skiotan's ford
A-chuckling at his day-work,
When lo! rushed cursing to the bank
A lout, and hurled his hay-fork!

The prongs ran far, and fast they stuck—
Pinned ever king such arrow!
Head-foremost Dag pitched in the stream
And dead as his own sparrow!

* * * *

King Swegder ventured under ground,
The *Dwarfs* ate him for luncheon;
Fiolner, he got drunk, and fell
Drowned in a deep ale-puncheon.

King Vanland broke his marriage-vow,
His wife dished him by witch-work—
King Domald like an ox they felled—
But Dag he died by pitch-fork!

* * * *

Now for a moral to my song,
Else were 't no more a ballad
Than bagpipe music without wind,
Or without herbs a salad.

Learn hence to spare poor hungry birds
In barley fields and ditches,
And never, never, like King Dag
To deal with Finland witches!

END OF LEGENDARY POEMS AND BALLADS.

## III.

# POEMS IN BLANK VERSE.

---

### LINES WRITTEN AT THE FALLS OF THE MASSAN IN GLEN-MASSAN, ARGYLESHIRE.

Romantic Massan! amphitheatred
By this Titanian ramparture of rocks,
And mountains whose hoar heads upheaving far
Above the cloudy zone, heaven's denizens,
Look down with scorn on this our nether world!
Unwearied artist!—many a weary age
Here hast thou travailed, fed by Summer's rain,
The floods of Autumn, and the Winter's snows
At this thy master-work!—the schisty mass
Spar-marbled, moulding into forms grotesque,
Or bold, or beautiful, that move delight,
And wonder welling into ecstasy!
Oh, ne'er did artist whose creative hand
Revelled in wood or stone, whose touch of skill,
Enduring forms of marble or of brass,
Or poet's song that hath outlived them both,
Hath made immortal! in divinest sleep,
Or when his brain the genial juice had stirred
To rarest fantasies, or when he roamed

A rapt enthusiast by some glorious scene
Dizzy with inspiration (Indian cave,
Atlantic forest, or Helvetian vale,
Or Staffa pillared on the Eubid wave),
Imagine forms so infinitely fair,
As thou hast sculptured here!
Untaught, untired,
Here through unannaled ages hast thou typed
Beyond the chisel's rivalry, each form
That varied Art in quaint emblazonry,
Gothic, or Greek, or airy Arabesque,
On Phidian column, or Vitruvian arch,
Temple or tower, cloister or càthedral,
Or Maurian mosque—the vaunted masterpiece
Of some proud hand, hath poorly exemplared ;—
Pillar, and peristyle, and 'tablature,
With frieze, with cornice, and with architrave,
Buttress, and battlement, and groined arch,
Gable, and gargoyle, mullion, and minaret,
In the live stone—a wilderness of forms,
Nameless and numberless, and exquisite!
Nor mutely, Massan, nor without a song,
Speeds thy lone task uncheered. From the grey depths
Of this thy reeking labyrinth, afar,
Startling the wild goat on his dizzy ledge,
Or stag at browse amid the mountain fern,
Mysterious sounds—a murmur manifold,
A music wild and multitudinous,
Chaotic concert of innumerous sounds,
For ever through the solitude ascends :

Now as of laughter hoarse ; now angry brawl ;
Now muffled moan, or infant's feeble wail ;
Now as thou rollest o'er the smooth green schist,
Pitching thy murmur to a merry song—
And now as from yon sparry ledge amain,
Out-thundering thunder, with a giant's shout,
Thou takest thy leap into the black abyss
Far, far below, hazed in eternal mist,
Boiling and hissing, in its restless round !

---

## TO AN ASH-TREE,

PLANTED ON THE DAY ON WHICH THE AUTHOR WAS BORN.

Ah, my coeval ! in thy hermit dell,
Which Pictish multitudes in days of yore,
Scooped with rude toil, to heave yon vasty round,
The *Hill of Graves*, and harmonizing Time
Hath touched to rarest beauty ! there thou stand'st
Goodly and green, in undecaying prime,
Though fifty winters with their snows have stormed,
And fifty summers on thine head have shot
Sheer their solstitial fires ! Time that hath laid
Ungentle finger on thine age-fellow,
Now gazes on thee, dimmed his eye, and writ
Its ridgy chronicle upon his brow,
And swept his temples with its icy scythe,
And lanked his cheek, and earthward stooped the form,
Was erst erect as thine,—Time that wrought this,

Hath but riped thee to beauty, hath but swelled
To shapelier roundness thy majestic stem,
And busked thy boughs with goodlier greenery,
And lent a lordlier limit to thy shade!

Ah, my coeval! since the hand of him
Sleepeth the just man's sleep, in yonder fane,
By whose rent walls, and ivied loneliness,
Two lake-born streams their wandering waters join,
Did set thee here, on my bleak natal morn,
Leafless and light, a solitary thing,
A toy, and tossed in February's wind,
Scantly distinguished from the withered bent;—
And since when first the perfect brain began
To read a meaning in the shows of sense
Beyond the sensely show, I looked on thee,
A supple sapling, slim and straight and tall,
An angler's eye might covet for his art,
Each summer morning as I stole to school
A satchelled imp, and stroked thy glossy stem
With thoughts were mystery half, and half were love,
As thing did kin with me, whose destiny
Was linked with mine in mystic brotherhood;—
And since the time when shallow boyhood o'er,—
Whose mirth and tears alike are passionless,
Sunshine that momently doth change with shower,
The curl and dimple on a drifting wave—
And youth drew music from a deeper pulse,
I sought this dell, and sat beneath thy shade,
This leafy amplitude—how scanty then!

A citizen new free of glorious worlds,
And wreathed my brow with myrtle, or with bay,
As fancy willed, and dreamed of Love and Fame,
Of Love all truth as poets feign of yore
By Esk or Arcady, nor guessed that Fame
Entwines the nettle in each wreath she braids
For brow of poet or of palatine,
But read the distance in the rainbow's ray,
And hailed this earth, unfallen Paradise!—
Ah, my coeval! since those days, when thou
Wert but a sapling, and a stripling I,
How many a season winged with many a change
Hath overswept us both!
Might I once more
Hug that sweet heresy, mine infant creed,
Deeming in thee some inner sense did hold
A brotherly communion with my thought,
How might I talk with thee, and tell of things
Should wonder-maze thee in thy solitude—
Where change so slowly comes, it comes not known,—
How chance, and change, and circumstance, have shook
Dukedom and dynasty and commonwealth,
How Time with tempest hath o'er-rid the earth,
And made strange havoc with the things that were!

Ah, my coeval! since the time when thou
Wert but a sapling and a stripling I,
Satan hath snapped his cord, and walked our earth,
And found him worshippers. The Heathen raged,
Imagining vain things. The multitude

To Lust built altars, shouting Liberty,
And danced on thrones, and quaffed the blood of kings,
And scrolled their murderer's knife with blasphemy,
And senate rabbles ruled '*There is no God!*'

And, my coeval! since the time when thou
Wert but a sapling, and a stripling I,
There have been Giants on the earth have dwarfed
The deeds of Cæsar, and of Saladin,
Of Pepin's, and of Philip's mightier son,
And turned to history what fables feign
Of Uther's heir, and Jove-born Hercules!
Watered their war-steeds in the Lusian wave,
And cooled their hoofs in Don and Danuby;
And laved their flanks in Moskwa and old Nile,
In Jordan and the Lake Gennesaret;
And flown their eagles from the Calpic strait
To Memnon's Temple and the Pyramids!

And, my coeval! since the time when thou
Wert but a sapling, and a stripling I,
There have been wonders on our earth. Hoar Art
Hath turned magician, and mapped the heaven,
And shown its blue Pacific islanded
With worlds whose seasons change to other suns:
And pored the rocks, and in their chambers read
Unwritten chronicles of bygone worlds,
Of flood and fire, of plant and living thing,
Undreamt-of history! and lit his lamp
Under the ocean surge, and steered his bark
Right against stream and storm, nor slacked his way

For summer calms, nor swerved his course to please
The humourous wind, but sped like arrow free,
'Thwart the amazed Atlantic without sail !—
And driven his ploughshare through the groaning glebe
Unforced of steed or steer ; and in his robe,
Which hands wove not, mounted his reeking car,
Unhorsed, unharnessed, and outraced the winds—
And seizing sunbeams, writ the living scene
In Nature's autograph—yea, at his need,
Bid heaven's own lightning speed his message on !

Ah, my coeval ! dost thou start at this,
And shake thy leafy locks incredulous,
Deeming thine ancient playmate's history
A traveller's tale doth smack of privilege ?

His song is sooth. Yet irk thou not thereat,
Nor envy our new world. There 's not a sin
Thy kingly neighbour, from his throne of clouds,
Benledi, looked on, since the day when first
His flamy forehead felt the Druid's fire,
But walks our world unscotched ; nor crime whose act
Doth hot the hearer's cheek, or horror-blench ;
Nor fleshly pang doth crisp the quivering nerve
With mortal ecstasy ; nor fiend with fear
Freit-haunts the guilty !

Nay, the Decalogue
Lacks eik of ordinance. Untabled sins,
Art hath found out, and grafted on nature's stock,
Grown fruits of bitterness unnative there.

Gaunt poverty from foul commixture spawned,
In locust legions, prowls without a home,
Our city ways through streets of palaces!
The midnight felon for his thrift assumes
The lamp of science, graduate in arts
Unguessed of Varro or of Verulam!

Art that hath won a way to either end
Of this round terrene, ploughed the Arctic sea,
And the Antarctic, found the magnet's home,
And measure-mapped the planets, hath not found
Patent for happiness, nor path avoids
The old all-trodden ways!—So rest content,
Mine old coeval, in thy Pictish dell,
Nor envy our new world, misguessing it
Happier, or better, than our world when thou
Wert but a sapling, and a stripling I!

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## THE DOMINIE'S LINN.

How wildly beautiful! It is a scene
Might trance the dullard in a poet's dream,
And make the bard turn beadsman,—rearing him
His hermit's lodge on yonder cliff that shoots
Its ledgy isthmus through the dizzy air,
Far o'er the darkened linn.—Thick overhead,
Hazel, and birch, and rowan would o'erbield
His cosy hermitage. The foamy stream,

Flung far and free many a fathom down
Like rope of snow, would, as it dashed it by,
For ever talk to him.

Nor would he lack
Living companionship. The chittering wren,
In yonder oak-stump's mossiest cleft, hath hid
Her bridal bower prolific. Where the stem
Shoots from the stock its pillared length, and shields
From the hoar east, the tuneful redbreast there
Nestles embowered. Beneath yon drooping bank,
Tufted with blaeberries, whereby a rill
Leads its low murmur, hath the poet thrush
Selected her love-couch. The bashful merle,
Her songstress rival, seeks a deeper shade
For rites connubial, the fragrant screen
Of yonder birchen copse. Where the grey oak
Disparts his topmost bough, the golden finch,
The chaffinch, and the silver linnet, hang
Their soft green hammock in the flexile fork,
Rocked by the summer winds; and all May long,
The bridal month of May, from bush and brake,
Tree-top, and gowan-glade, the live glen through
Rings eve and morn with lavish minstrelsy!

Look on that linn—a mirror set in stone!—
Its rocky rim, smoothed by the kissing wave,
Befringed with primrose and anemone—
How still, how lovely! In its limpid depths
There 's not a pebble that doth paint, or pave,
With exquisite mosaic, its gay floor,

May not be singled hence. In the clear wave,
Tacking in shoaly fleet, or shooting wild,
Like silver arrow through the sunny sheen,
There 's not a minnow trout, or dotted parr,
Might not be counted from yon high rock-ledge
Or from this shelvy shore! High overhead,
A wall of living leafage,—thickly thatched
Tier upon tier, friezed with the jutty point
Frequent and bold of grey outpeering rock,—
Hems in, all round, this isolate domain,
Itself a world, that shows of its co-world
But yon blue speck of far unclouded sky!

How wildly beautiful! It is in sooth
A scene with inspiration might endow
The painter's vision or the poet's dream:
I marvel me why spot so beautiful,
Should bear so uncouth name.

'How rude soe'er
The name may sound, it had, methinks, a right
Poetic baptism. Sit thee on that couch
Scooped in the living rock, more richly veined,
More quaintly fashioned, carved more curiously
By the slow chiselling of the winter floods,
Through silent centuries, than chair, whereon
Sat on their crowning day, in royal state,
Duncan, or Dagobert, and I will tell thee
What here, upon a summer's day, befell
A luckless dominie, and why that pool
Bears its memorial name.

He was a dwarf,
The village pedagogue, poor Peter Parlan,
So shrunken, shrivelled, disdimensionèd,
With head so gulfed in back, and tiny legs
So pedestalled on club-knots, 'twas the faith
Of village crones he was not man-begot,
But fairy, whom the elf-queen in exchange
Left in the cradle on the night she stole
Thence the authentic boy.—Alas! poor Peter
Owed not his shape to fairy, or to fiend,
Blear witch, or eye malign, but to a dame,—
A howdy hight—a sage and godly dame,
Who loved sound doctrine much, stout cordials more,
And at his natal hour the soft man-clay,
With maudlin muscle dropping on the floor,
Dinted and dwarfed the yielding pulp of flesh
To maimed misshapenness. As he grew up,
Old freit-ful crones if chance he crossed their path
Would bless themselves, mumbling half curse, half prayer:
The village beauty, if he looked on her
Shuddered unconsciously, and beggar brats
With names of scorn would hoot him as he passed.

But in this form so marred and mutilate
There dwelt no dwarfèd mind. The genial brain,
Where sovereign reason holds her seat in chief,
In this her sojournage, its bony shield
Had fenced from injury; and the boy-dwarf—
The hunted Helot of each tyrant imp
Among his schoolmates in their idle hours—
Rose, when with mind mind strove for mastery,

Their unapproachèd chief ; whether at will,
Bidden, he drew from Memory's treasure-vault
Her buried wealth ; or from their proper stores,
Deliberate Reason, and the power whose eye,
Lynx-like, doth seize through the wide whole of things,
Each apt, each fair similitude, the Muse,
Creative Fancy,—sole authentic Muse—
Responded to his need.

Nor passed such gifts
Unprized, unpatroned, of a reverend man,
A learned and a kind, the village priest,
Whose pity-plea and generous praise obtained
From gentle-hearted wealth, wherewith the youth
Might slake his thirst in Academic groves,
At glorious springs. There, the laborious hours
Won him high meed that learned lips accord,
Save to the gifted few. With trophied name
Returning thence, fain would the laureate boy
Approve his conscious powers ; from sacred chair,
Voicing, oraculous, heaven's ordinance
In the thrilled ear of breathless multitudes,—
Precept or promise, or the vialled wrath
Reserved for sinners, scoffing Sadducee,
Or form-proud Pharisee ;—or memory-full
Of act, of instance, and of aphorism,
And the quaint logic of the mazy law,
Winning the ear, on their high judgment stool,
Of the gowned brotherhood ; or mid the cheer
Of crowded Senate, with high argument,
High-phrased, ruling the charmed democracy,

That fierce and fickle sea, whose sink or swell,
Fiats a nation's fate!

Alas! full soon
From dreams like these, awoke the humbled boy,
Experience-sad. His garbled form grotesque
Moving to mirth, or pity's milder mood,
That kins it with contempt, the hope forbade
Of such proud destiny, and he became
With spirit crushed, and soul that spurned his lot,
The village pedagogue. His task-work done,
Irksome, unloved, yet done with faithfulness,
Straightway he plunged him in the desert woods,
Far from a mocking world. 'Twas only there
He might be said to live, indulging wild
Poetic dream or speculation high,
Long, lone, uncounted hours—dwelling in worlds
The sun ne'er shone upon, yet fairer far
Than ought rejoiceth in his golden ray.

Nor lacked there in this gay dream-world, I ween,
Vision of love and loved ones, lovelier
Than flesh e'er typed it from. What though with scorn,
And eye upraised to heaven in shudderment,
The flesh-proud beauty of this vulgar world
Loathed the dwarf-boy—what though from the soft lip
Of mortal maid, his lips had never sacked
Love's balmy spoil, yet masked this form unloved,
A poet soul, to every passionate mood
Intensely quivering,—of all beauteous things
(Woman in first, nature's chief handiwork),

Tremblingly conscious,—whether contrast keened
The universal sense of Beauty, or
Mysterious distance to forbidden things,
And unfamiliar, lent exaggerate charm.

Repelled with scorn of proud earth-beauty, here
The poet-boy in amorous visionry
Revelled delicious hours. Unloathèd here,
He clasped unshuddering, in ideal bliss,
Imagined beauty, whose proportions shamed
Whate'er created form to the rapt sense
Of artist, or of amorous youth, unveiled,
Marble, or maid. Here prurient fancy fed
On such high fare to morbid curiousness,
One luckless eve he looked with lawless eye
On fair forbidden things, and dree'd his due,
That anabaptism strange, whose memory
To this fair spot bequeathed its uncouth name.

Here was his favourite haunt. In this wild nook
Emparadised amid the wave of woods,
And fall of waters, many a summer's eve
He wore to midnight; thence with lingering step,
Turning him sadly to this dull earth-world,
As doth the schoolboy to his penance-house
From the fair freehold of the field and sky.

One luckless eve, at that sweet season, when
June's lingering rose, with the first jessamines
That braid the sister month, twine lovingly
In brake and bower, a still and lovely eve,

When the hushed hamlet to undreamy sleep
Bade the toiled labourer at curfew-call,—
Three friends, three village Hebes, whose fair forms,
The wholesome heat of eighteen summers had
Rounded and riped to that full symmetry,
Full, yet elastic, that doth spell alike
The passionate instinct of ideal youth
And eye in love's mysterious ritual,
Practique or theorique, profoundly read,—
In coy but conscious loveliness, repaired
To this fair pool, from curious eye secure,
Ah, vainly deemed ! at that so silent hour,
To bathe their beauty in its quiet wave.
Ah ! little wist they as their hands unbound
Each swelling zone, and freely to the view,
Ripe, rosy, round, in climaxed loveliness,
Charm after charm unveiled, that snugly sconced,
Where thou didst feign thy poet hermitage,
Near whence the torrent takes its airy leap
Into the gulf below, behind yon oak
Whose stunt stem dangles o'er the dusk profound,
Sat the tranced dominie ; with straining eye
And maddened pulse, devouring limb by limb,
As slow evolved each alabaster form
Swelled from its snowy shroud, itself more fair
Than drift new snowed upon the topmost peak,
Froze as it fell, of some high northern hill,
Goatfell or Cruachan, stood all revealed,
The beauteous Triad, in each others' arms
Coiling and circling, lest the very birds,

The little forest birds, should wantonly
Look on their charms unscreened! Then suddenly
Unclasping, wildly to the pool they rush
With splash and scream, terror half feigned, half felt,
Disporting wantonly! But all afraid
To tempt the inner deep, they venture not
Beyond the shallow shore, eluding thus
The dwarf-Actæon, as he vainly strained
His inch of neck over the black abyss,
By distance, and the boughy interscreen,
Baffled and barred: while at each lusty plunge
His maddened fancy pictured the fair flesh
Had blessed his vision, then in the clear wave
Mirrored and manifest. Could he bestride
That pendant bough?—'Tis done.—A little more—
A very little,—and—the bough o'er-bent,
Like a huge acorn, by October's winds,
Shook ripe and tawny from his shallow cup,
With eldritch yell, into the guggling gulf
Plump dropped the Dominie!

With terror-shriek
Off ran the startled Naiads to the woods,
Robeless, nor cast one horror-look behind,
Till under mantle of the modest night
They reached their homes, and told their breathless tale
To shuddering hearers, of authentic devil,
Fragrant of brimstone, horned, and hooved, and tailed,
With fiendish laugh shooting the precipice
To do his disport in the black hell-pool.

Fast spread the tale and far. Roused from their sleep,
The bolder spirits of the hamlet, armed
With rustic flambeau, birch or blazing pine,
With vaunted unbelief, and knocking knees,
Haste to the haunted pool. There shivering stood,
Half-drowned, half-mad, fresh from his penal plunge,
The dripping Dominie. The foremost fled
Horror-struck, vouching that the devil indeed
Did squatter near the shore; till one more bold,
After due exorcism, at length proclaimed
The true Deucalion. Then burst the shout
Of laughter irrepressible, the jeer,
The rustic raillery, the comment gross,
Mocking the drenched Actæon would espy
Forbidden mysteries; till, pale with rage,
And muttering imprecations as he ran,
He rushed into the woods, nor since that hour
On Scottish ground was seen the Dominie!'

'He did not do self-murder?' 'So 'twas deemed
For long ten years. The banded villagers
A live-long summer's day the lone wood through
Searched pool, and precipice, and matted brake,
For the poor suicide; but searched in vain.'

'But doth he live?' 'He lives, and lives renowned,
Late chance-detected by a college mate,
Seems, in that boundless Babel, where alone
He who would hide his sorrow or his shame
From curious eyes can taste true solitude.

His name, his person, and his tale unknown,
A fame, a mystery, his master-mind
On the diurnal page, its hoarded wealth,
Wisdom, or wit, or high state-argument
Deals to delighted millions. In this spot,
This lone and lovely, in deep communing
With nature's works and working, in both worlds,
External and intern, he sowed the seed,
The noble seed of that high vintaging,
Now in its harvest home. Then irk thou not
At uncouth name to this so fair a spot;
But when thou ponderest some page of power
With varying cate banquets the varying taste
Of plausive multitudes, alternate charm
Of song and science, the creator-mind
Unnamed, unguessed, think of the Dominie
In his proud garret by the river Thames,
And bless the moment when from yonder rock
He cast unlicensed eye on this fair pool,
And anabaptized in its purging wave,
Gave in memorial its uncouth name!'

## VISION AND VERITY.

The wish is granted, and the prayer heard,
And his youth's vision turned to verity.
There are the mountains on whose cloud-swept peaks
Opened his infant's gaze. There is the stream,

In lazy reaches lingering through the vale,
Limpid and lovely still, as when he plunged,
A bold boy-swimmer, in its deepest pools,
Or dragged the scaly captive to the shore.

There are the glens where earliest was heard
In spring the cuckoo's call, and rifest found
The wild wood-berry, and the wild bird's bower;
There are the woods amid whose mystic depths,
Druidic glooms, or fairy-haunted dells,—
Enchanted ground,—he wandered, revelling
In freits and fantasies, as humour swayed
In the dear dreamhood of romantic youth!

A various landscape, and a beautiful,
And passing dear to him. And when his fate
Called him to Indian climes, in fortune's suit,
On yonder height o'erlooks the fair domain
His sires had tenanted, a tearful while
He paused and sighed. 'Thrice happy he the man
Who calls that Eden his. Oh, were it mine!'
And on the sudden seemed an airy voice,
As echoing his thought, or mocking it,
In that lone place, to syllable aloud,
'And thine it shall be!' On his way he went.
Musing and marvelling, and evermore,
In many a weary, many a perilous hour
In far-off climes, that vision haunted him,
And hearted with proud hope. On the faint march
O'er poisonous swamps, or solitudes of sand,
Herbless and fountainless; through matted brakes,
Where crouched the tiger, and the serpent coiled,

Wound for the deadly spring; on battle-field
Slippery with blood; or up the treacherous pass
Hunting the fierce barbarian to his hold,
A charm of power to cheer and hearten him,
That vision's voice was sounding in his ear!
And fortune friended him. Honours and wealth,
On patient years of toil and temperance,
And worth approved in field and council-hall,
Dropped rife, and ripely earned. He sought his home;
And the fair fields his sires but tenanted,
Won from a race whose waste had beggared them,
Are now of right his own. Thrice happy man!
His wish is granted and his prayer heard,
And his youth's vision turned to verity!

Nay, mock him not; mock not that palsied frame,
By Indian suns and wasting fevers worn
To outline of disfleshed humanity;
That sunken cheek, frog-like of hue; those limbs
That shrink and shiver in each passing breeze!
His mountains tower as grandly as of old,
But where the step that, lightly as the roe's,
Bounded from pass to peak? The river winds
As silver current through as sweet a vale;
And glens and greenwoods in their depths enfold
As leafy labyrinths, and fairy dells,
To trance the lone enthusiast in his dreams;
But rheums, and aches, and aguey terrors daunt
Their fond revisitant, and young romance
Has long been tombed in life's realities.

The victor vanquished when his battle's won,

Henceforth self-exiled from his native vale,
He homes a denizen in city thronged
With moiling multitudes, haggard and lean
With cark, and care, and life's hard exigents,
That in murk alleys suck envenomed air!

And was that vision, then, a demon's spell,
A phantom luring to a phantom's chase,
Delusion all, and cruel mockery?

Nay, do not count it so. That morning dream
Was noonday act and living energy.
It nerved for noble deed, made labour light
In loving hope, and hope wrung holiday
From years had else been drudging servitude.
And though he can no longer with light foot
Ramble the mountain steeps, nor tempt unharmed
The dank embowerment of his woods, or nurse
The fond illusions of romantic youth,
In city cooped 'mid smoke and tainted airs,
And crowds and crime, he yet can dream in dreams
That image not the future, but the past,
And once were substance, though but shadows now:
Can dream of dangers that were bravely met;
Can dream of duties that were fairly done;
Can dream of service preste and perilous,
Rendered his country at his country's need,
When manhood's nerve was ready minister
To manhood's high resolve. And when he treads,
With faltering steps and faint, the halls where meet
His country's noblest, wisest, worthiest,
Welcome and worship greet the aged man

From loving lips and hands; his whispered name
The stranger follows with a quickened gaze,
And reverential, as one whose deeds
Rank with his country's monumental names!

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## LINES WRITTEN ON DESTROYING BY FIRE A LARGE MASS OF MANUSCRIPT PAPERS.

That puny pile upon my blackened hearth
So airy light it seems imponderable,
In bulk so small, but scant a shovel's full, —
In that poor heap of unsubstantial dust
Do I behold the labour of long years
Concentred, and consigned to nothingness?
Even so.—The plaything of the flame, I 've seen
Ere one short hour had made its dial-mark,
Of two-score years the purchase and the pains
Dissolved to ashes, or dispersed in air!
And thou who, gazing on the ruin, sigh'st
To see the toiled-for treasure of long years,
Of days of weariness and nights of watch,
Shrunk to this poor impalpable of dust,—
By menial swept as rubbish from the hearth,—
Shalt with earth's proudest be thyself, one day,
As scorned a substance, in as scant a space,
A schoolboy's handful of contemnèd clay!—
Dust shall to dust return, matter to mould,
Mortal resolved to mortal elements!

The work hath perished, and the instrument
Of mortal mould wherewith the worker wrought,
It too shall perish with its day—work done—
But not the worker self :—
The worker-spirit all immortal then,
Uncumbered and uncurbed, shall live, shall work.
Among immortals, with immortal's powers,
Unwearied action, and unsated joy !

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## THE PROPHET'S LAMENT FOR JERUSALEM.

How is the city solitary now
That rang with life and joyous multitudes !
And she, of provinces that sat as queen,
Become a widow and a tributary !
The gates of Zion and her palaces
Are burnt with fire ; her towers and walls thrown down ;
Like harts her princes hunted over hills
Where but the fox finds home ; by heathens' hands
Her hoary elders and her holy priests
Hanged on the wayside trees ! The sucking child
For thirst lies dead on his dead mother's breast,
The maiden ravished and the matron slain ;
Through dreary streets without inhabitant
The weeping children ask for bread in vain ;
And they who delicately fared, and walked
In proud apparel, swathed in rags are seen
Cowering on dunghills, and on garbage fed !

The passer-by, as on Jerusalem,
The fallen and desolate, he casts his eye,
Wagging the head for pity or for scorn
Cries in amaze—'Is this Jerusalem,
The holy place, the city beautiful,
The perfect and the joy of all the earth?
Where be her temples now, her palaces,
Her towers, her bulwarks, and her battlements?
Where now her sabbaths and her passovers,
Her feasts, and festivals, and holy days,
The voice, the vision, and the prophecy?
The vision vanished and the prophet dumb!'
How is the gold waxed dim; the fine gold changed!
And Zion's sons that were as Ophir's ore
Accounted precious, but esteemed as clay,
Or meanest substance that the potter's hand
Fashions for meanest use! Ah, woe is me!
The crown hath fallen from our head, and we
Have with our fathers sinned,—and they are not;
And we the bondman's iron yoke must bear,
The burthen of our land's iniquities!
For this I mourn; for this, by day and night
Rivers of waters from mine eyes run down.
O turn to us again, Lord God of Hosts,
And we will turn to Thee. Renew our strength
As in the times of old; from heathen lands,
From Chebar, and Chaldean Nineveh,
From Pekod, and the land of Merathaim
Bring back Thine own; for Thou art pitiful,
And, as Thy years, Thy mercy is for ever!

## IV.

# SONNETS AND SHORTER PIECES.

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### THE KALENDS OF MAY.

(FROM THE LATIN OF GEORGE BUCHANAN.)

HAIL, sacred morn! whose genial ray
  Ushers the new-born May along,
With mirth, and sport, and holiday,
  And the gay rites of dance and song!
Hail vernal change, and vernal cheer,
Renewed with each renewing year,
The bloom of nature's boyhood gay,
Hasting to manhood and decay!

Of old, in nature's golden time,
  When love was law, and justice sway
Spring only knew the happy prime,
  And breathed one universal May!
She ceaseless o'er the teeming ground
Diffused her quickening spirit round,
And fields perpetual harvest bare
That knew nor tilth nor tiller's care.

And thus, throughout the Happy Isles,
Where joy and youth for ever stray,
Serene the poet-region smiles,
Tempered with one immortal May!
And thus by Lethe's languid strand
That laves Oblivion's silent land,
Soft airs with lulling murmur move,
And soothe the sad Elysian grove!

And thus perchance when final fire
Hath purged this ball at heaven's behest,
Such gales shall new-born life inspire,
And fan the region of the blest!
Hail month of pleasaunce and of prime,
That gladd'st short while our mortal clime!
Relique of nature's sinless bloom—
Foretaste of fairer springs to come!

---

## CASIMIR'S ODE—*AD SUAM TESTUDINEM.*

BOOK II. ODE 3—TRANSLATED.

My sounding harp, of carven boxwood made!
While ether smiles, and the low summer breeze,
Wooes with faint breath the scarcely ruffled trees,
Hang on that poplar's bough; while careless laid
On this green, grassy bank, I hear reclined
Thy strings thrill softly to the whispering wind!

But ah! what sudden cloud invests the sky?
The rain comes rattling on! Let us arise—
'Tis ever thus: the joys we fondly prize
Elude us still, and as we grasp them fly!

---

## VERSION OF PSALM CXXXVII.

'By the rivers of Babylon,' etc.

By Babel's streams, on Zion's hill
We thought; and, all unstrung,
We wept, as on the willow trees
Our silent harps we hung.

'Strike Judah's harp to Judah's song,'—
Our spoilers gave command;—
Ah! Zion's song how can we sing,
Slaves in a stranger land!

My tongue be dumb, and my right hand
Of strength be shorn and skill,
If thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
My joy, my chiefest, still!

'Raze, raze Jerusalem to the ground,'—
Cried the fierce Edomite;—
In Edom's day, that cry, O Lord,
Remember and requite.

And happy thrice the avenger arm
Shall dash against the stone
Thy very babes, O daughter doomed
Of bloody Babylon!

## DAVID'S LAMENT FOR SAUL AND JONATHAN.

(2 SAMUEL I. 17, ETC.)

How fallen the mighty ! how perished the brave !
And Israel ! thy beauty laid low in the grave !
O tell not the tale in the streets of the foe,
Lest the Philistine's daughter exult in our woe.
And ne'er on thy mountains, Gilboa, be dew,
Or rain the waste fields to refresh or renew,
For there, vilely there, are the bow and the shield
Of Saul and of Jonathan left on the field,
As though they had ne'er been anointed with oil
To lead the Lord's battle, and laden with spoil
From the chase of the Philistine scattered and slain,
Returned with the sword in his scabbard again !
In their lives they were lovely, and still side by side,
They joyed, and they suffered, they lived and they died,
And dauntless in daring and matchless in deed,
Their strength was the lion's, the eagle's their speed.
With tresses all torn, and with garments all rent,
O daughters of Judah, raise loud the lament
For Saul and for Jonathan, mangled and cold ;
For Saul, who arrayed you in scarlet and gold :—
And oh, more than brother ! the lover and friend
Through perils that loved me, and loved to the end,
O Jonathan ! rare was thy friendship, above
The loving of woman in woman's one love !
Oh, lost to thy birthright, and lost to thy race,
In the prime of thy strength and the pride of thy place,

The love that I bore thee, the anguish I feel
No time can efface, and no tongue can reveal!
How fallen the mighty! how perished the brave!
And Israel! thy beauty laid low in the grave!

---

## LAMENT

## FOR THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES.

### November 1817.

There's woe in the cottage and wail in the palace,
And fond hearts are sobbing, the young and the gay;
Alas! for the pride of our mountains and valleys,
The Rose-bud of Albion is withered away!

In the dew-bright of morning thy fresh stem adorning,
How proudly we viewed thee and hailed thee our own!
But the blight-wind hath blown, and our mirth turned to mourning,
The Rose-bud of Albion is withered and gone!

Eyes that wept not for pain, hearts that quailed not for danger,
Unblenched 'mid the deeds of the death-dealing fray,
Now melt as they mourn with the desolate stranger
His Rose-bud of Albion all withered away!

In friendship and feeling three proud lands are kneeling,
Their feuds are forgotten, their hearts are but one,
As they bend in their tears o'er the turf is concealing
The Rose-bud of Albion all withered and gone!

## LINES WRITTEN AT THE GARRAWALT IN BALLOCHBUIE FOREST, BRAEMAR.

AUGUST 24, 1855.

ROLL on, roll on, unheeding still
Whose steps thy lone sojourn invade ;
The reiver from his moonlight hill,
Or queenly dame, or cottage maid.

They pass, the proud, the stern, the sage,
The mountain tribe, the courtly throng,
While ceaseless here from age to age,
Thou croon'st, self-pleased, thy simple song !

A simple song, yet passing sweet,
Unchanged while all things changing be ;
Still spent, unspent, song, stream, how meet
An emblem of Eternity !

---

## LINES WRITTEN APRIL 18, 1845.

THERE is a flush of beauty on the earth,
There is a gush of music in the air ;
The birds shout madly out of very mirth,
Flower shoots with flower as emulous to compare !
The lambs are coursing on each green hill-side ;
The wild bee booming on the catkined tree ;
From heaven the sun looks laughing in his pride,
His glory mirrored in the surfless sea !

Man, only man, whose vaunted vision blends
The Past and Future with the present hour,
Unjoyous through this scene of joyaunce wends,
Wayward to nature and her genial power;
All shows, and sounds, in ocean, earth, and sky,
Warping to consort with his selfish cheer,
Looks all this beauty with unraptured eye,
Lists all this music with unravished ear!

---

## THE BIRK-WOODS OF GLENGARRY.[1]

A WAYFARER, my furlough spent,
I may no longer tarry
Among your bowers, a well-content,
Sweet birk-woods of Glengarry!

Ben-tie upheaves his shoulder vast,
A bastion broad and airy,

---

[1] NOTE.—The birch-trees in this romantic glen, with their light feathery branches and milk-white stems, have a striking and singularly beautiful effect, especially when looked at from below, and seen hanging from the summit, or down the side of the magnificent precipice. For miles, over the foot of which, the Garry, as it issues from the lake of that name, rushes for a considerable distance, pent in a sinuous and contracted channel of rock, forming one continuous cataract, the thunder of which is heard afar off. Salmon, it is said, rarely pass these falls, not so much from their height, which, at any one given leap is not remarkable, as from the form of the rocks which overlap each other, ledge by ledge, from the bottom to the top of this lofty and noble staircase by which the Garry descends from its parent lake to the valley beneath. The whole scene is over-looked and closed in by the fine mountain Ben-tie.

To fend you from the ocean blast,
Sweet birk-woods of Glengarry!

Huge Tor unseems his rocky side
Twisting a channel chary,
That churns to foam your torrent-tide,
Sweet birk-woods of Glengarry!

Your boughs o'er cliff and crumbling height
Dishevelled hang, and hairy,
From stems as pillared marble white,
The birk-woods of Glengarry!

Your knowes how green! your nooks how fair,
But trod by fawn or fairy!
Where myrtles mix, to balm the air,
With birk-woods of Glengarry!

And Garry lake! on thy lone brink
Droops red the rowan-berry
O'er pools where loves the roe to drink
'Mid birk-woods of Glengarry!

One day from Memory's hoarded hours
Hoar Time shall never harry,
I 've lived among your balmy bowers,
Sweet birk-woods of Glengarry!

But day is done, and duty calls,
A call I may not parry;
Farewell the glades, and glens, and falls,
And birk-woods of Glengarry!

Yet here, where bards were wont to wake
Strains high, or sad, or merry,
A wandering minstrel's blessing take,
Sweet birk-woods of Glengarry!

---

## FALSE ROSALIE.

THEIR fragrance flinging
The flowers are springing,
The woods are ringing
With melody,
My sorrows scorning,
With pomp adorning
Thy bridal morning,
False Rosalie!

The bells are pealing;
The bridegroom kneeling,
His kiss is sealing
Love's vow on thee;
While ocean-parted
And broken-hearted,
I die deserted,
False Rosalie!

Caressed, caressing,
While blessed and blessing,
Thy joys repressing,
Thou 'lt think on me;

The vows were plighted,
The love is slighted,
The life thou 'st blighted,
False Rosalie!

To rest, a stranger;
For wealth a ranger,
If courting danger
O'er land and sea,
I piled me treasure
In miser measure,
'Twas all to pleasure
False Rosalie!

Hope, ever scheming;
Love, ever dreaming;
Home, ever beaming
From far on me;
Each sweet deceiver
Did balm life's fever,
Farewell for ever
With Rosalie!

---

## NOTABLE DAYS.

In Time's archives some days are notable,
Lettered in large in Memory's Calendar.
Not that with portent, or with prodigy,

With sign in heaven, or with sign on earth
They ushered high event, fore-oracled
In dream, or vision, or prophetic trance,
The death of tyrant or the birth of king,
A nation's horoscope; but that they chronicle
The date or destiny of minds that claim
Kin and communion with the finer spirits,
Whate'er their creed, their colour, or their clime,
That bear the mint-mark of divinity.
Such days are notable. And one such day
Hailed Virgil born, and wailed Lucretius dead;
Saw Shakespeare and Cervantes turn to dust,
Saw Newton breathe, and Galileo die!

---

## MEMORY.

Memory! thou fond embalmer of the past,
That art to age what Hope is to the young,
Oh! stay the wavering shadows fading fast
Of days that in their flight unprized, unsung,
Rise rainbow-hued in thee! Give back again
Life's pleasures winnowed from life's plagues and pain!

Alas! it may not be. The dream is fled,
Life's morning dream that loth and lingering died,
The fond, the false, that with the glorious dead,
For high achieve my name should be allied,
Science or song, that the long ages might
My debtors make for doctrine or delight.

And let it pass, and many an idle dream :—
But oh ! give back those hours of pure content
With God himself, by mountain lone, or stream,
In loving converse with his wonders spent ;
Or at his call at Duty's shrine devote,
Joys twice enjoyed, in passing, and in thought.

## SONNETS.

### MAY.

Ay ! ye are musical again, ye birds !
With eloquent music, and your muse is May !
What harp symphonious to immortal words
E'er matched the glad soul-gushes of your lay ?
Ay ! ye are beautiful again, ye flowers !
What sister's love, what handmaid's curious care,
E'er sent forth blushing beauty from her bowers
On bridal morn, so garnished or so fair ?
Ay ! ye run merrily again, ye brooks !
By brake and brae, making sweet lullaby
To unfledged nestlings in the neighbouring nooks :
Or dashing dew-showers on the wild-flowers nigh
In amorous revelry ! companions gay,
Welcome ye all ! welcome again, green May !

## AUTUMN.

Transparent Autumn! in thy cold clear air,
On peak, and precipice, and far-off fell,
To summer's ken were all invisible,
The eye, as on some new-found land and fair,
Dwells wonderingly. Tartaned of colours rare,
The woods, how beautiful!—the oak's yet green,
Blent with the pale ash, and the willow hoar,
The purpling beech, and yellow sycamore,
The blood-red rowan, and brown birch between,
And mottled elm!—so royal robe, I ween,
Nor flowery spring, nor rosy summer wore!
Songless and sere, yet lovely is the scene!
So be my life, the Autumn of thy year,
Though fading, cheerful, and though cold, yet clear!

## WINTER.

### A CAVE BY MOONLIGHT DURING FROST.

Here is thy palace, Winter; and in sooth,
It is a kingly one! With finger frore,
Thy brother Cōld, of fair and fragile ore,
Hath decked it royally. Daggers uncouth—
Damoclean armoury—from the roof depend,
Frail riveture!—lichen and leaf enshrined

Crystal mosaic—map the walls, where twined,
Ivy and fern, their beaded drapery blend,
Adown the mirrored sides. Inward extend
In gorgeous columnry a glittering line,
Pillar, and pinnacle, and shaft, and spire,
And over all, a flood of living fire
Showers yon resplendent moon from her high shrine !—
What queen, O Winter, hath a bower like thine ?

## FANCY AND FACT.

As when beneath barbaric rage, old Rome
Saw fretted fane, and marble fountain lie,
Urn, altar, obelisk, imperial dome,
And columns carved with names that never die :—
As when Bertoldo's son,[1] in the weird sky,
Beheld that Paradise, his sinful home,
Magic's frail masterpiece, like lashed sea-foam
Pass into air before his purgèd eye :—
So Fancy ! thy gay worlds, more frail, more fair,
Have age, and reason—rude iconoclast !—
Demolished all, with hands that would not spare,
And Memory turning on the perished past
Her unspelled eye, sighs o'er the ruins rare,
'Alas ! that things so lovely would not last ! '

[1] 'Bertoldo's son'—Rinaldo, long detained by the arts of Armida in her enchanted island.—*Vid.* Tasso, *Jer. Del.* B. XVI.

## WRITTEN IN AUTUMN 18—.

O NE'ER did earth so genial season know,
Since that fair garden planted by the Lord,
Eastward, in Eden, smiled! Luxuriant, lo!
Herb, foliage, fruit in gay profusion poured,
Our fallen world looks Paradise restored!
Sunshine and shower, with bland attempered sway,
Have decked out nature as for holiday,
Bounty with beauty blending in accord!
Yet, O fair season, must thou flower and fall,
Of me remembered with an aching heart,
Blow following blow, and dart succeeding dart,
Health, friends, and fortune, hast thou reft me all—
And these hoar temples, and this palsied mind,
Are the memento thou hast left behind!

---

ANOTHER year!—a year without a song!
Ah, loveless, joyless, bleak and barren Age!
Art thou the boon for which we beg and long,
To crawl the last poor laggers on the stage!
The admired of men become the schoolboy's scorn,
Shoved by the busy, pitied by the wise;
To see old faith betrayed, old friendships torn,
The good man's ruin, and the bad man's rise!
Kings change with beggars, names of old renown
Swept from the earth; in fortune's blindfold game
Fame the impostor, wealth the witless crown,
And saints at rising, set in sin and shame!
Who this to suffer, and who this to see,
Thy prize—thy price—long life! would bid for thee?

## TO A FOUNTAIN IN A CAVE.

Fountain ! that in this cavern's cold confine,
Well'st ever from thy subterranean urn !
What though unlike that famed Licesian burn,[1]
Thine icy waters' flow not mixed with wine :—
Nor like th' Olichian stream, or Camerine,
Make lip perjurious or incestuous known :
Or those twin springs by Merlin's art endown,
Did one to love, and one to hate incline—
Yet hast thou virtue, daughter of the cave :—
The hunted hare doth bless thee, and the roe,
And each wild bird of game.—And blushing, lo !
The mountain maid bends o'er thy mirror-wave,
Pure as thyself her beauty to behold :—
And thirst goes med'cined from thy temple cold !

---

[1] Note.—The 'Licesian burn' (*omnis Licesius*) was in Thrace. It was a common spectacle, we are told, to see travellers stretched upon its banks in drunken sleep, the consequence of having indulged too freely in the *wine and water* with which it flowed. According to Pliny the waters of the river Olicha felt boiling hot to persons guilty of perjury. And the contents of the

'Dianæ fons qui Camerina gignitur unda'

refused to mix with wine

'Si quis, manibus non castis, hauserit unquam.'

The fountains of Love and Hatred, which Boyardo and Ariosto have turned to so poetical account in the miraculous conversions and counter-conversions of their heroes and heroines, were, according to romance, in the forest of Arden, and had been '*endown*' with their peculiar virtues by the enchanter Merlin.

## SURPRISED BY MORNING IN THE PROSECUTION OF AN INTERESTING STUDY.

Is it the flush of dawn ?—It cannot be !
The watchman-bird that sings when morn is near,
Was it his note, that loud, and long, and clear ?—
In heaven's erewhile so crowded canopy,
Thou solitary shiner ! art thou he
The planet star of morn ?—How fleet have flown
Night's silent hours, uncounted and unknown,
Wrapt in thy dream, divine Philosophy !
Not so the wretch by guilt, disease, or care,
Thirled to a sleepless couch. To him how long
Stretch the slow hours of torture or despair !
How watched, how wished, the first faint streak of light,
And punctual watch-bird's immelodious song,
That all too soon, to Morn dissolve my Night !

---

Gerrow ! Since first I climbed thine airy steep,
This glorious stretch of shore and sea to trace,
A generation of earth's fleeting race
Hath passed away to silence and to sleep !
And Time, that carries with remorseless sweep
Change on his wing to person and to place,
Even of thy mountain world has changed the face.
Where now but roams the wild-deer or the sheep

Over the homeless waste, the shepherd's cot
Couched on the glen burn's side, and round it played,
In merry group, the rosy mountain maid
And bright-eyed boy, now doomed an exile's lot
In foul-aired city pent, and nightly dream
Of Gerrow's blooming heath and Gerrow's murmuring stream!

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